

Frank Johnson on Lord Home's 'Letters to a Grandson'

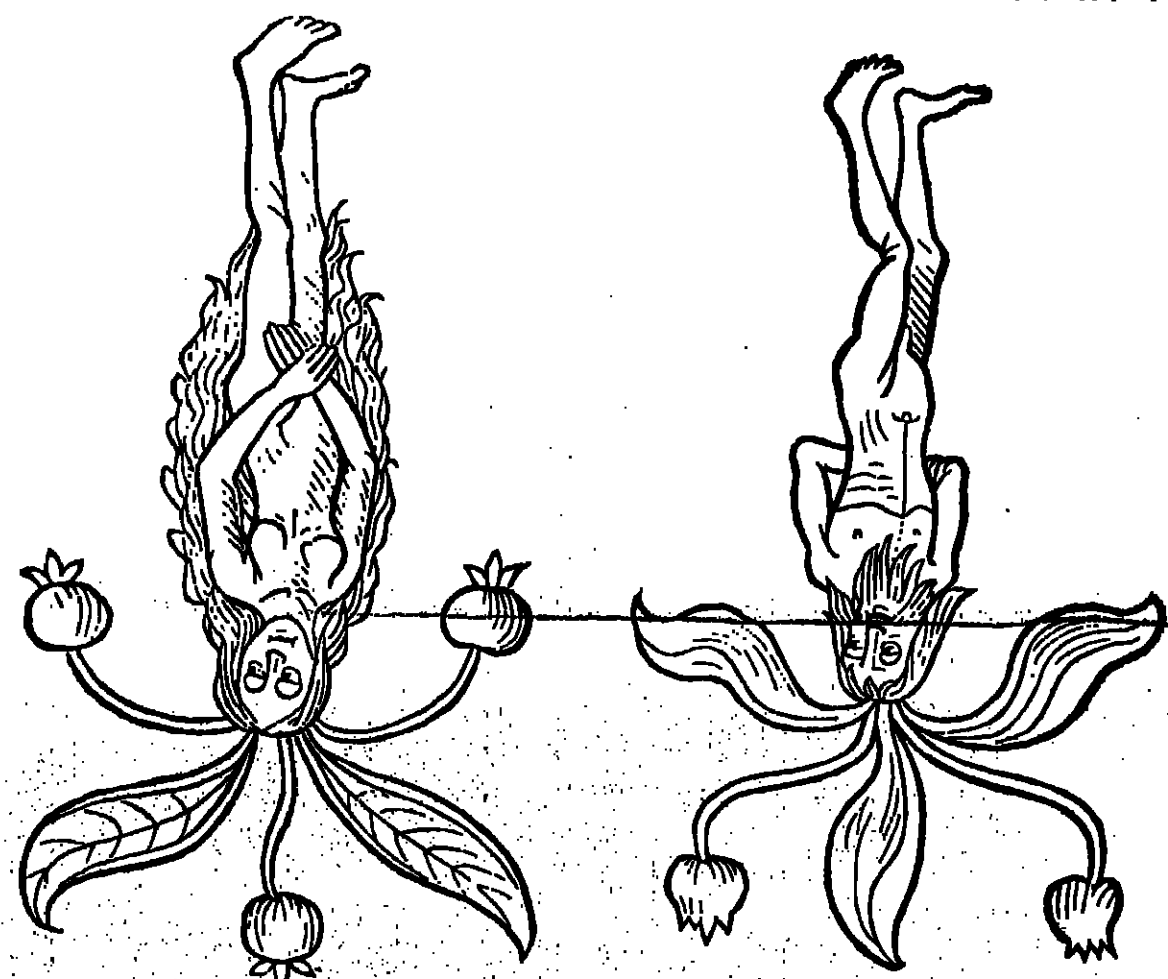
John Marston's 'The Fawn'; facts about Bax

Poetry: D. M. Thomas, George Barker

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Jacob Meydenbach's woodcut on paper depicting Mandragora from the fifteenth-century herbal, Hortus Sanitatis, reproduced from Gardens of the Middle Ages by Marilyn Stokstad and Jerry Stampard, published by the Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.



S. S. Praver: Freud in translation

Brian Pippard: God and the new physics  
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Noël Annan: the case for M. R. James



'The Three Brothers Bröwe', 1598, a miniature from the Burghley House Collection featured in the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum entitled Artists of the Tudor Court: The Portrait Miniature Rediscovered 1520-1620 (reviewed on page 832).

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Donald Davie: the poetry of Yvor Winters

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# From reportage to evaluation

Steven Lukes

W. G. RUNCIMAN

*A Treatise on Social Theory*  
 Volume 1, The Methodology of Social Theory  
 350pp. Cambridge University Press.  
 £25 (paperback, £8.95).  
 0 521 24906 6

Practising social scientists who turn to reflection upon the nature of their activity do not always arrive at profound or revealing conclusions, or indeed even an accurate account of that activity. Often it is better to do as they do rather than as they say. Philosophers, on the other hand, reflecting upon what social scientists should do, do not always grasp, or even care, what they do, or can do. They legislate, at a vast distance from live debates and real research. One of this book's many virtues is that it focuses philosophically informed reflection upon the actual work of, and difficulties faced by, practising sociologists, anthropologists and historians (though not economists or psychologists). W. G. Runciman is himself such a practitioner. Among his previous books is the still pertinent *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, and the two successor volumes to *The Methodology of Social Theory* are devoted to "substantive social theory" and "applied social theory" about "the case of twentieth-century England" respectively. The argument of this first volume is both supported and advanced by frequent detailed examples that are often highly instructive and entertaining in themselves, in most agreeable contrast to the normal philosopher's practice of adducing examples that are radically underdescribed. Runciman offers us methodology teaching by examples; and for this alone his book is well worth reading.

Yet, though philosophically informed, the argument is plainly not directed at philosophers, or indeed to philosophers' concerns. Indeed, it pursues what one could call an "avoidance strategy" in respect of philosophy. Runciman practices methodology rather than philosophy, offering "guides to practice" - maxims with the help of which sociologists, anthropologists and historians may be enabled better to succeed in what they set out to do. He says of his book, correctly, that it does "not pretend to advance by a single step the resolution of any of the disputes among

philosophers of science": one of its principal purposes is to enable practitioners "not to ignore but, so far as possible, to bypass those disputes without damage to their substantive research". So it goes "far enough and no further into the philosophy of social science" for such practitioners "to proceed with their work without further misgivings about its vulnerability to methodological criticism". Accordingly, they "do not

abundant in the "enchanted garden" of the natural sciences) and, on the other, from taking proper account of the distinctive nature of his subject-matter (namely, intentional and meaningful action). Plainly his strategy makes philosophical assumptions, but its purpose is to protect social science from philosophy, not least from the paralyzing influence of the "lecture room sceptic".

What, then, is Runciman's principal

either philosophical or technical ones. If this argument is correct, he says, "between those who affirm and those who deny that there is a fundamental difference in kind between the sciences of nature and the sciences of man... can for practical purposes be regarded as closed".

Is it? Can it? To answer that, we must look more closely at the

degrees of discretion on the part of the social scientist engaging in them. Is this case convincing?

Consider first *reportage*, or "primary understanding". To *report* is to "say what is going on... in such a way that any rival observer will be bound to agree, however much the two of them may disagree over the further presuppositions which may underlie, or even dictate, their subsequent explanations, descriptions or evaluations". It "goes no further than the point where noises and gestures can first be labelled as actions because of the meaning to 'them' which makes them so", by "direct reference to the agents' own intentions and beliefs in the contexts in which they have been observed". So we may report that "it is a rain dance" or "they are getting married" or "he is aiming a gun at a rabbit" or "they believe in God" or "they own slaves". In such cases, we are asked to imagine a "recording angel" supposed to be "present at and throughout whatever event, process or state of affairs is under discussion, but to have brought to it no explanatory, descriptive or evaluative presuppositions of any kind". He is only, as it were, "the keeper of a videotape library so comprehensive and so detailed as to put him in a position to see and hear everything that an enquiring fieldworker could ever have wanted to see or hear." How is success in *reportage* to be assessed? Runciman suggests two criteria: "acceptability in principle to those whose actions, and therefore intentions and (where relevant) beliefs, it designates"; and acceptability to "all rival observers".

Where, then, is the "all-important frontier between the theory-neutral (but not presuppositionless) *reportage* of an event, process or state of affairs on the one side and its explanation, description or evaluation on the other?" Runciman answers that to say "they are practising magic" or to speak of a "hierarchy of prestige" or "feudalism" or "peasants" is to pass beyond that frontier: such terms cannot be transposed '*salva veritate*' into the terminology of rival observers from different theoretical schools".

The chapter on *explanation*, or "secondary understanding", is the weakest in the book. Its thesis is that in the social as in the natural sciences explanation isolates presumptively causal connections that are grounded



"Hans", from the section entitled "Piercing" in City Indians: Photographs of Western Tribal Fashion by Chris Wroblewski and Nelly Gommex-Vaez (80pp. Frankfurt: Eichborn, DM38.3 8218 1710 0), with a bilingual German/English text.



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in theory at a more fundamental level. For

every science depends for its grounding on the regularities disclosed at some relatively more fundamental level, and sociology, which is not merely historically but analytically the last of the sciences, cannot but be the least autonomous in this respect. But it is not the less scientific for that. [Sir Keith Joseph please note] There is no denying that there must be laws at some level if sociological or any other causes are to be causes of social or any other events, processes or states of affairs. But there is no need whatever for them to be related to the explanandum and each other as they are in so atypical a science as Newtonian mechanics, with its closed systems, time-reversible regularities and interlocking differential equations.

Runciman readily admits that "in the absence... for the time being at least... of a comprehensive and well-tested psychology, all explanations of explanations in the social sciences are merely speculative and provisional". Yet, he reassuringly says, sociologists do not need to wait "before formulating explanations of human institutions and practices which can be shown to be valid for reasons which aly observers who dispute them can go out and test for themselves". Thus

Levi-Strauss's hypothesis that the story of Aspidochelone has been composed and transmitted as we observe it to have been because it is an expression of the strain inherent in a system of patriarchal but matrilineal cross-cousin marriage stands or falls by the same criterion as Tocqueville's hypothesis that the storming of the Bastille gave expression to the resentment of the institutions of the ancien régime which came to seem progressively less tolerable as the possibility of removing them came to seem progressively more feasible.

Such explaining works through "quasi-experimental reasoning" appealing to "suggestive contrasts". The test of its success appears to be plausibility in the face of available rivals: in the absence of a "comprehensive and well-tested psychology", we must accept "weak but adequate theoretical grounding" and "as relaxed a definition as possible" of "theory" and "cause".

It is the engaging chapter on description, or "tertiary understanding", which constitutes the book's real claim to originality. Although it entirely eschews the vast literature (German, French and English) on hermeneutics and interpretation, it is rich in shrewd insight and telling illustrations from literature and biography, as well as history and social science. It advances the idea that description is a distinct social-scientific task: that of conveying the actor's world from within. Using metaphor and simile, it seeks to "bridge a presumptive divide between the culture of those whose words, thoughts or deeds are being described and that of the presumptive reader and/or the sociologist himself". The function of descriptive theory is to "formulate concepts that can bridge the divide between the former's and the latter's experience". The "ideal-typical concepts of a good explanatory theory will be broad in scope, general in content, free in operation and simplifying in effect"; those of a good descriptive theory may be "parochial in scope, specific in content, restricted in operation and complicating in effect". Description gives the sort of understanding we get of "their life and times" by reading (the list is Runciman's: Flaubert, Malinowski, John Dollard, William Foote Whyte, Erving Goffman, Oscar Lewis and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie).

Description fails, if it involves misapprehension (which in turn divides into incompleteness, oversimplification and ahistoricity) and mystification which divides into suppression, exaggeration and ethnocentricity. These are "six types of inauthenticity", and of course there must be more. Runciman diagnoses these sins of omission and commission as cases of the describer supposing that "they" see their world "in a way which is pre-emptively dated by the descriptive theory of his own". And where evaluation "pre-emptively" interferes with description you get derogation (leaving the reader with a pejorative implication that goes beyond the reportage of their evaluation by "them") and

hagiography (leaving the reader with an implication that is too favourable), romanticization and generalized cynicism (which Runciman calls "no-bullshit bullshit").

How, then, can description succeed? Runciman suggests once more (as with reportage) the criterion of authenticity: descriptive metaphors should be "acceptable in principle to the person whose behaviour or attitude is being described with the help of it". He further suggests representativeness: one must "convey both authentically and representatively the priorities of subject, milieu and period". And it must convey these successfully to "rival observers". Yet incompatible descriptions may cohere rather than conflict, as "jointly constituent parts of a common whole". In matters of reportage and explanation, Runciman ventures, we must accept "some sort of correspondence theory of truth": in matters of description "as it were a coherence theory".

On evaluation Runciman gives a straight and uncomplex version of the fact-value distinction: "the methodological difficulty is not that facts and values are inextricably intertwined". The "disentanglement" (the metaphor recurs throughout) can always be performed. On the other hand, he does not advocate an old-fashioned "value-neutrality", realizing its futility as a maxim for real-life social scientists. Instead, he does something rather odd: he advocates what he calls the "pre-supposition of benevolence". This amounts to the assumption of Pareto-optimality, where "the members of a definable group or category are all agreed that a change is an improvement in their well-being as they see it, and the researcher cannot find any respect in which anyone else's well-being is diminished in consequence", then the social scientist is entitled to compare "better" and "worse" states of affairs according to this canon. This question whether, under such singularly rare circumstances, the group or category "is or would have been better off by their own presumptive standards under one or another set of conditions" is a properly sociological one. In asking it, the social scientist

is committing himself to taking seriously the wants, grievances and aspirations of the members of the society concerned, however alien from his own. But in refusing at the same time either to appraise their values and preferences in the light of his own, or to take sides as between different groups or categories of "them", whose values and preferences conflict, he is preserving the independence from moral, political or aesthetic judgment without which any claim to be offering the reader a work of social science and not of philosophy or propaganda (or both) would be impossible to sustain.

The social scientist, then, is entitled to speak of "successful reform", "discernible progress", "enlightened policy", "beneficent influence", "heightened well-being", "amelioration of conditions", "diffusion of prosperity", "increase in welfare" (or their opposites), but not, presumably, of, say, "political and cultural liberation" or a "growth of civic consciousness" or the overcoming of "false consciousness" in any but the thinnest sense. The allowed judgments are, Runciman thinks, theory-neutral. If, say, the US genuinely prefer slavery after abolition, the sociologist who questions that preference (by asking whether they are better off despots) is "patronizing and irrelevant" and invokes a "blatantly paternalistic judgment grounded, if at all, in a highly contentious theory of determinate human needs".

Is Runciman's case convincing? I doubt it, and my doubt comes down to this: so far as I can see, the four strands of his argument are either too thin for his purpose or inextricable from others.

Can "reportage" – the simple identification of "what is going on" – really be distinguished from "explanation" and "description"? Surely not at any level relevant to the practice of social scientists? For first, are not successful reports the best available explanations of what people say and do? Runciman seems to think that we can simply discover what people mean and believe (though he acknowledges that to do so is not "presuppositionless" and a matter of "pure observation"), without assessing

its truth or rationality. But do we not rather determine this by selecting that account which best explains what they say and do, in the context of all they say and do, and does this not require us to invoke our canons of truth and rationality? We say "he is performing a rain dance" because this best explains his words and actions. Mutual intelligibility relies upon most such accounts being entirely unintentional and obvious. But they are not always so. In West Africa certain tribes apparently say "we insult" and the response is laughter. But what do they say, and is it laughter? And are they insulting, or joking?

Second, are not reports, at the level of actions, rather than events and processes, always descriptions? Of course, such descriptions may be thin ("he winked") or thick ("he winked with his customary sly irony"). Some reports might seem utterly unintentional to the "recording angel" (eg "he kneels and mutters") but to be of use to the social scientist he must make sense of what the man is doing (namely "praying") and that is already to describe. In short (to sum up these two points), one significant difference between the natural and the social sciences is that the data of the latter cannot be identified without being explained and interpreted.

Third, of course, description in Runciman's sense must be successfully communicated: the describer must succeed in conveying the actor's world from within to his reader. Yet it is hard to see how this could be a theory-neutral or value-neutral activity, since the describer must relate to and build upon his reader's theories and values. And can the social scientist in pursuit of "explanation" really avoid "description" and "evaluation"? He cannot avoid description if his explanations and explanandum already require interpretation (recall Aspidochelone's story and the "storming" of the Bastille and the "resentment" of the people). And he cannot avoid evaluation if the very concepts in which he is couched reflect the (value-relevant) interests of the explainer in, say,



The gilded head of an enemy king from the Golden Stool of Ashanti, reproduced from Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies by Michael Craton (38pp. Cornell University Press, £25).

attributing responsibility to historical actors, or discovering obstacles to the realization of values such as welfare, or freedom, or self-development, or community. Finally, I cannot see Runciman's restriction of such inquiries to Pareto-optimal improvements relative to (imputed) actual preferences as anything more than a cautious liberal prejudice.

If my doubt is justified, two conclusions follow. First, that his methodological maxims are going to mislead practitioners. They had better not do as he says: social anthropologists would be better advised to follow Clifford Geertz's advice and seek "thick descriptions" from the start, while sociologists and

historians should rather heed Max Weber's suggestion that their explanations embody their value-related interests (or *Kulturwertungen*). And, second, that his avoidance of strategy fails because it rests on inadequate philosophy, and in particular a false theory of meaning. (Of course, social science should be protected from inadequate philosophy). It is this which distorts the structure of his argument and the sharp boundaries he draws (including that between social science and philosophy itself). It also seems to avoid, rather than solve, the old debate about the natural and the social sciences. So looks as though the debate will go on.

are stories of vehicle problems, embarrassing language difficulties, a smashed jaw, hepatitis, malaria, and lots more. Either Barley or the Dowayo seem particularly obsessed with male circumcision, this being a main topic of conversation between him and his informants.

The jokes are usually at the author's expense, playing on his own ignorance of Dowayo customs (and foreign customs in general). Commenting on one ceremony which was beyond his level of comprehension at the time, Barley notes: "I merely sat on a wet rock, watched, asked idiot questions and took photographs of the parts that seemed intuitively interesting." Some statements, though, could be offensive to those of particularly prodigious sensibilities, by whom I mean those inclined to see racism and sexism in every joke about ethnicity or sex. Consider this bit of advice, reminiscent of an Evans-Pritchard or a Malinowski: "Sexual encounters in Africa are an unromantic and brutish in their nature that they serve rather to increase the alienation of the fieldworker, not to moderate it, and are best avoided."

Barley is in fact part of a growing trend. Like H. J. Heinz (with Marshall Lavee) on his fieldwork among the Bushmen, A. F. Robertson in East Africa, and Manda. Cesari (a pseudonym) in Central Africa, he seems to have as much to say about himself as about his people. But as we like Heinz's *Namkwin*, Robertson's *Community of Strangers*, or Cesari's *Reflections of a Woman Anthropologist*, *The Innocent Anthropologist* is light-hearted and funny. It has no serious point to make, except perhaps that sometimes it is worth while to have a good laugh at one's self. And so in some ways it is a book for the connoisseurs who can easily recognize the fieldworker who can easily recognize him or herself in the person of the author. But one does not have to have been through anthropology's great rite of passage to do that, and Dr Barley's account should also find favour with many an armchair anthropologist, both professional and amateur.

## Doing the Dowayo

Alan Barnard

NIGEL BARLEY

*The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a mud hut*  
189pp. British Museum Publications.  
£9.95.  
0 7141 8054 8

For an anthropologist, Nigel Barley came to first-hand field experience rather late. He wrote his Oxford DPhil thesis on Old English manuscript material (from an anthropological perspective), then took a lectureship in an anthropology department which in this book he claims, somewhat unkindly, to be "of no particular academic distinction". Only after several years did his colleagues at University College London finally persuade him to undergo the initiation rite which turns a mere scholar into a real anthropologist. In 1978 he set off to study the Dowayo of Cameroon.

*The Innocent Anthropologist* is Dr Barley's account of his experience, doing, and preparing for, his fieldwork. The book is best classified as humour, rather than anthropology (if the two be mutually exclusive), but it does give us a few unusual glimpses into problems of anthropological method rarely dealt with in the more technical monographs. Relevant, though irrelevant, details on African, bureaucratic, and anthropological customs comes through with great subtlety, and in this regard the book would seem to be recommended to anyone setting off for the field or just wanting to know what fieldwork is about. Yet those who have done anthropological fieldwork themselves will probably enjoy reading it most.

Indeed, the catalogue of diseases, mishaps, frustrations and failures recounted by Barley is enough to put off many a first-time fieldworker, or anyone else who still holds to the romantic image of anthropology as gentlemanly adventure or lady's gentleman.

For example, the first problem every

THOMAS MANN

*Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*  
Translated by Walter D. Morris.  
435pp. New York: Ungar. \$29.50.  
0 8044 2585 X

Nationalist, patriotic, conservative, and spiritually autobiographical, Thomas Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* was written during the First World War and, in part, against his brother Heinrich, and Heinrich's anti-nationalist, anti-militarist essay on Zola, (itself aimed in part at Thomas, and Thomas's earlier essay on Frederick the Great. It is a strange, enormously clever (also foolish), and (in an alarming sense) fascinating piece, of sustained, often anguished and sometimes contorted eloquence.

Unease – if what is explored and expounded with such fluency and sweep can truly be said to be uneasy – is clear, even rampant, in the opening paragraphs. Can this, this what? be said to be a "book" as the word is understood by one with "twenty years of not completely thoughtless artistic practice" behind him? (A nice conjunction of doubt and self-confidence). Or should it be thought of as notes, or chronicles, or a form of diary? This "bundle of papers", which at least sometimes shows "the ambition and habits of a work", is "something intermediate between work and effusion, composition and hack-work". And so it goes on for pages yet, invoking Carlyle, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Stifter, Flaubert, Dostoevsky... surely remote from political discourse than the mere adjective "nonpolitical" would convey! Yet if these "notes" do not (as they may not) form "a work of art", one reason is that they are "just too much the work of an artist".

Mann explains that he has entered the lists against "the new" – the new "passion", the new sentimentality, the new "resolute love of humanity" (his quotation marks), sharpened as all this by French rhetorical maliciousness – simply because it has confronted him personally, and all the more poignantly because equipped with "the highest literary skill". (Possibly a touch of family pride there). The liberal, forward-looking, internationally-minded *Zivilisationsliterat*, his brother, also his enemy, is political, and therefore "democratic" – for there is no other version of politics – and democracy denies "every nonpolitical ethos". It turns art into "social literature" and intellect into "a thing between a Jacobin club and Freemasonry". Democracy, or politics, denies the German character, since Germans do not love politics and truly want "the much despised authoritarian state". Politics should be left to the Poles and the Irish, it being the only activity they are good for.

This in the present conflict Mann desires Germany's victory, but in "a disinterested way": he has shares in heavy industry, no capital invested in world-trade. It strikes one that his picture of the democratic Germany that might emerge from defeat is not unlike Forster's – or his character Fielding's – more comical view of India achieving nationhood. "What an apologetic! Last come to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood... She, whose only peer was the Holy Roman Empire, she shall rank with Guatemala and Belgium perhaps!"

In representing Germany as wordless and barbaric in its mystical resistance to "Roman civilization" and the shallow talkative West, Mann reminds us of a creation of his own. We may have thought of the giant Dückmann of *The Magic Mountain*, verbally incoherent yet dwarfing the "intellectual lights" around him – but perhaps Mykiss, Peepertorn, stand for Germany. Mann's Germany, what use would a wordless Thomas Mann be? Again he sneers at "moral pussyfooting", he is pleased to say. They approved of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, that "gigantic pleasure liner" which "the German West" is proud to have sunk. (Mann's West? Germany? where was Germany in 1915? Mann is an art he was to have given his life to that, and Dr Barley's account should also find favour with many an armchair anthropologist, both professional and amateur.

# The abyss of German-ness

D. J. Enright on a translation of Thomas Mann . . .

ironic in making the Heinrich-like Settembrini consider it "politically suspect", yet in *Doctor Faustus* it was the Devil, trustworthy in such matters, who characterized music as "the Devil's Kingdom . . . A highly theological business . . . the way sin is, the way I am." Rather than music, or "Life", Germany is Soul, perhaps. "What is German is an abyss."

In Chapter 4 "Soul-Searching", Mann sets out to examine himself, or to do so more overtly. He is in some ways, he finds, un-German. But then, *Elective Affinities*, "taken formally", is not a very German work, and elsewhere Goethe's prose is "sometimes scandalously French". In fact, to be to some extent un-German, even anti-German, is a part of being German. Look at Schopenhauer, indisputably German ("Can one be a philosopher without being German?"), but also "a *bel esprit*" (nasty rhetorical French expression?) and a "European prose writer" of a new type. Much the same is true of Wagner: very German ("Can one be a musician without being German?"), and yet, by virtue of the "all-powerful European charms" that emanate from his music, occupying a "modern, almost extra-German position". Likewise Thomas Mann (Thomas Mann?): he was a burlesque artist ("the German and the burlesque character are one and the same"), and yet – in the shape of *Felix Krull*, the memoirs of a confidence man – parodying the *Bildungsroman* itself, the great and characteristically German literary form!

The concept of Germanness grows increasingly vague and impalpable – but only because it grows ever larger, extending beyond good and evil. It is profound enough, as abysses often are, to accommodate its enemies and its opposites. Or it would do so were Mann not so very indignant, so sorely wounded. Who, one wants to inquire, were all those un-German Germans, "civilization's literary men", busily hoping for Germany's defeat and subsequent assimilation into "Europe" and "democracy"? One would think that Mann stood alone against massed hordes of them. But perhaps a brother was a massed horde. At an event, anger impelled him to spit words, and his enemy, is political, and therefore "democratic" – for there is no other version of politics – and democracy denies "every nonpolitical ethos". It turns art into "social literature" and intellect into "a thing between a Jacobin club and Freemasonry". Democracy, or politics, denies the German character, since Germans do not love politics and truly want "the much despised authoritarian state". Politics should be left to the Poles and the Irish, it being the only activity they are good for.

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Why the harmful and compromising galley service of this book that no one demanded or expected of me, and from which I will have no trace of thanks and honour? One does not worry to this degree about something one does not need to worry about, that is none of one's business because one knows nothing about it and has nothing of it in oneself, in one's own blood. I said that Germany had enemies within of her own walls, allies and advocates of world democracy, that is. Is this possibly repeated in miniature? Do I contain elements in my own conservative inner nature that aid and abet Germany's "progress"? Could it be true . . . that I myself with a part of my nature was and am fated to further Germany's progress to what in these pages is given the quite figurative name . . . of "democracy"? And what part would this be, then? The literary part, perhaps? For literature is democratic and civilizing from the ground up; even more correctly: it is the same as democracy and civilization. And could it be my authorship, then, that, for my part, has caused me to further Germany's "progress" – while I was fighting it conservatively?

The answer to some of the questions milling around in that passage must be "Yes". In *The Magic Mountain*, published in 1924, six years after the *Reflections*, there is a similar confrontation: between Settembrini, internationalist, optimistic-ameliorative, Italian, organ-grinder of high-minded platitudes (a favourite term of disapprobation in *Reflections* is "bellezza", as in "bellezza radicalism"), and Naphta, fierce, pessimistic, authoritarian, ex-Jesuit Nietzschean. When it comes to a duel, Settembrini fires in the air and the incensed Naphta shoots himself in the head. The young Castorp, for whose mind and heart these two had been contending, has already made his choice:

"Irony is always irony towards both sides", Mann says near the end of *Reflections*. And for reassurance we turn back to a rather famous passage in the Prologue, where Mann asks himself why he is making all this effort:

What was it other than mawkish lack of seriousness and pliant lack of tragic sense when the *extreme* world sentimentally deplored the execution by order of a court-martial of an Englishwoman who misused her nurse's uniform to help Belgian soldiers over the border?

Her conduct couldn't even have been "purely patriotic" because she wasn't a Belgian, but what seems to exasperate him most is that the woman ("a thoughtless ninny") fainted and had to be unceremoniously shot by the officer in charge. "A political action that can lead to the firing squad should only be undertaken by someone who feels himself justified and called to the task, and who is to some extent certain that he will not faint before the firing squad." Is this a new rule of War? Or is it the seashore speaking, the artist with his care for propriety, unity of action and organic form?

Mann was never sentimental – but never again was he to be so blankly feelingless, so (to put it mildly) unspectacularly cross. What had happened to his famous irony? Rather more amusing, and less discomfiting, are his shocked references to the wickedness of the Bourbon régime – "lits de justice, Bastille, Deer Park" (an editorial footnote intimates that this was where French girls were "brought to the king from the people"), "a parasitic court" etc – and to what could be expected in the case of a German defeat: "a somewhat amusing, somewhat insipidly humane, trivially depraved, femininely elegant Europe . . . a Europe of business and pleasure, a Europe of the Seventh, a Montecarlo, Paris, literary as a Parisian cocotte . . . Well, propaganda breeds counter-propaganda, and here,

view, very much what Hovelacque has said so well in his earlier study, "Les Causes profondes de la Guerre". "Germany" has embodied for 2,000 years the eternal struggle against Rome. The German is by nature no politician; he does not act on reasoned principles, but on deep, elemental instincts; he repudiates, ever since he first came into contact with it, the Roman ideal of international law, the application of intelligence to politics, the supremacy of reason. He is essentially unitary, whereas the child of Rome insists on putting everything into words, debating, explaining, justifying. The latter conceives the war as "a colossal Dreyfus affair", an attempt to rectify a legal wrong. For the German it was a summons of destiny, to which the whole race responded to the inmost fibre of its being. Or, to take another metaphor, it is the *Vorspiel* of *Lothengrin* against the Latin spirit of international elegance and lucidity.

The Germans are a people of heroic temper, ready to take guilt upon themselves, and not inclined to cringing moralizings. They have never complained of what was wrought against them by the pitiless enemies of their life, but neither have they ever doubted their own right to use revolutionary methods. They approved these methods, and more than approved them. They approved the invasion of Belgium; and had nothing to take exception to in that event except the Chancellor's phrase about the wrong he was doing. They approved the destruction of that insolent symbol of England's sea mastery, the giant pleasure ship *Lusitania*, and faced undaunted the hue and cry of humanitarian hypocrisy which then

What he has to say about Germany is, with far more amplitude and detail, and of course from an opposite point of

Mann is talking like a politician, like a more than usually gifted Minister for Propaganda.

"Yes, yes, pedagogic Satana, with your *ragione* and your *rebelle*," he thought. "But I'm rather fond of you. You are a wind-bag and a hand-organ man, to be sure. But you mean well, you mean much better, and more to my mind, than that knifed little Jesuit and Terrorist, apologist of the Inquisition and the knout, with his round eye-glasses – though he is nearly always right when you and he come to grips over my paltzy soul, like God and the Devil in the medieval legends."

Those with natures so deeply sceptical, so ironic in cast, are unlikely to be progressive in their politics. Neither do they make reliable reactionaries. Politicians as we know them, whether of the Right or of the Left, could make precious little (except by very careful selectiveness) of this complex and vehement debate between brothers. Heller has remarked on the difference between the passionate learnedness of the *Reflections* and "the forward-looking political exhortations", well-meaning and studiously simple-minded, of Mann's later years, and in particular the high-minded platitudes about East and West with which he greeted the end of the Second World War. He was not talking about himself then, and not *de profundis*: he was speaking as a representative – the representative – of the "good Germany", a rather different Germany. There are some fine passages here on art and artists, for example:

Art, like religion, is the human sphere; politics disappears before it like mist before the sun. Art assimilates politics, even use it as a subject, it can portray political events, but then art will humanize politics, illuminate it psychologically, and its objectivity will be serene and prodigious all the way into tragedy.

Even so, it seems to me that *Reflections*, however brilliantly argued and sustained, contains a considerable deal of rant, and in general the best things in it are a pleonastic rehashing of what is said more tellingly, and more persuasively, in Mann's fictions both before and after. The publishers observe that now we have the last major work of Mann's to be translated (no easy job!) into English. It is also the last we need, the one we least need, to read.

## . . . and the TLS review of the German original

*Thomas Mann's Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* was reviewed by T. W. Rollston in the TLS of December 19, 1918: This is not the first of Thomas Mann's utterances on Germany and the world war. The first was a literary outbreak of *fiur Teufelchen*. What we have here is of the nature of an explanation of *the world*, an attempt to indicate the philosophic basis of his political faith. It is no retraction; it is not a title does he withdraw; these reflections of the past two years have certainly taken on a sober, not to say sombre, hue. The outward strength shown by Germany, the official bluff, the "lie", which, as Persius says, "has always been one of our chief weapons both by land and sea" have not blinded him as they did Delbrück, and one does not even have to read between the lines in order to see that Thomas Mann, at the climax of his country's military achievement, had grave doubts as to where Germany would stand when this great turning-point in human history had been reached and passed. His book is therefore peculiarly valuable to students of modern Germany. It is inspired by no illusions. It endeavours, successfully or not, to discover and set forth what is deep and enduring in the German mind and character; what the rest of the world will always have to reckon with, and the rest of the world would do well to study it with close attention. That, indeed, is no unenviable task, for Mann is an admirable writer in his own way. His sense of words is faultless; his experience of life and his reading are both of them wide and varied, and he is a sincere thinker and artist.

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filled the world. They not only approved, they screamed for the unrestricted prosecution of submarine warfare, and strove to the verge of an outbreak with the rulers who delayed to give it free way. It is for our enemies, out of their democratic orthodoxy, for whom "the people" must always be good, as well as out of their political craftiness, to try to distinguish between the honest German people and their abominable leaders – not for us. And, however the war may end, we shall accept the German share of the guilt of it, every man of us – except perhaps a handful of pacifists and of the saints of literature – and seek for no scapegoats in the functionaries of the moment.

Thomas Mann may at the present hour perhaps regret a little that he penned these lines – and that not only because the German people in defeat have scarcely lived up to his conception on this point, the Allies at least must not be deceived in the main concern. If he is right in his conception of what Germany represents in world-politics, then most certainly a temper and character so deeply graven in a nation's breast will not disappear by magic in an hour of disaster and of turbulence. "Civilization," as Mann calls it with a sneer, has triumphed in arms, but until it has triumphed in spirit Germany will be a mortal danger to the world. Let us not forget, however, that this very triumph, the triumph in Germany of the spirit of democracy, was the cause of Mann's deepest anxiety – he saw it from far off, it is true, but he saw it; and the issue of the war must have made it far more menacing to the Germany of 1914 whose soul has been so vividly portrayed in this remarkable book.



## Tales of one city

E. S. Turner

PETER BUSHELL  
London's Secret History  
267pp. Constable. £8.95.  
0 09 464730 5

Adrian Stevenson is said to have defined an editor as "a person who separates the wheat from the chaff and prints the chaff". That is the exact principle adopted by Peter Bushell in his anecdotal survey of London. We have all read history books in which the footnotes are vastly more diverting than the text, so why not a book of footnotes? The great puzzle is to know why Mr Bushell and his publishers pretend he has compiled a secret history of the capital.

Bushell's method is to tour the city street by street, plucking tales, like pennies, from the air. On a single page we encounter the former home of the Bath Club, which censured Johnny Weissmuller for "failing to swim like a gentleman"; the site of the pawnbroker's where Crippen disposed of his wife's jewels; the site of the chemist's where Dr Quincey bought his first opium; an "emporium" of Marks and Spencer's "two out of three women will be wearing a 'St Michael' bra"; and a branch of Bata, which once sold a pocketed climbing boot for nudists. That's how it goes: the magpie assembly system practised by a real zealot.

As a former London guide-lecturer Bushell probably sat one of those examinations with questions like "Which is London's smallest police station?" "Which public clock killed a

man?" and "From which gentlemen's club was Aneurin Bevan kicked into the street?" He works off these familiar bits of lore along with less familiar and often delectable items, like Maurice Baring's thoughtlessness in committing a waiter at the Turf Club, causing him to break down (it was the first kind word he had received in forty years); Sir Philip Sassoon's hauling down of the Union Jack over his Park Lane home because it was too garish against the evening sky; and Gladstone's habit of going to bed with morning tea in his hot water bottle.

Bushell is not a man racked by doubt. He says the widow of the 9th Duke of St Albans left enough sovereigns to carpet twenty-four square miles, and does not query a statement that John Fielding, the blind magistrate, could recognize the voices of 3,000 wrongdoers. But it is his insatiable appetite for ghost stories that will have honest unbelievers screaming for mercy. He tells us that a Man in Grey was once seen by 150 people in the Theatre Royal, where he materializes in the end-seat of row D in the upper circle. The ghost of Admiral Sir George Tryon was seen by "several hundred" people at his wife's at-home in Eaton Place at the exact moment his ship went down. In University College Hospital the ghost of a nurse who inadvertently poisoned her sweetheart with morphine "usually manifests at the bedside of someone about to receive a morphine injection". There are many, many more. A tree in Green Park talks and laughs. The silhouette of a mighty axe can sometimes be seen overhanging the Tower. At midnight on moonlit nights in Westminster Abbey a statue turns the page of a stone book.

Horace Walpole said of the once-notorious Cock Lane ghost (strangely omitted from this book) that "it would not pass muster in the paltriest convent in the Apennines". Some of Bushell's ghosts would not pass muster even in Broadcasting House, where belief in such things is unusually strong. Yet in his bibliography there are at least five books on haunted London, so he must know what the market will bear.

Many items are quoted from John Timbs and other curiosity-collectors of an older day. These tend to be recognizable from the old-fashioned fates which overtake people: attacks of apoplexy, hair turning white overnight, minds becoming unhinged by horrors. Some of Augustus Hare's best stories are here, notably the one about the wooden-legged woman of Cadogan Place who married a pressing widower and found he had twice been married (by sheer coincidence) to women with wooden legs; also the woman who woke in the night, alarmed by mysterious gurgles, to find that a sleep-walking butler was laying dinner for fourteen on her bed (the London connection is not specified).

For most stories no source is given, which does not greatly matter, but occasionally curiosity is whetted. Neville Chamberlain, described as "the startled cab-horse" and "utterly charmless", is said to have had an outlook typical of his fellow factory-owners, who did not hold with safety precautions. When the cries of the maimed drove other workers from their benches, "the directors imposed a series of fines for workers inconsiderate enough to scream when injured".

The author misses a chance to show caricatures, preserve till the very last. Friends continued to single out this quality of infantine tenderness. "How did they know the man", said Cruikshank at the novelist's funeral, "who thought him a hard, cold, and cutting blade. He was much more like a sensitive, loving little girl." "Dear old kindly child!" noted Herman Melville; "he had all the nervous susceptibilities . . . of a woman; having, indeed, about him more than any other man I have known, of Goethe's untranslatable *Empfindlichkeit*". Children, sensitizing his pangs of loneliness and nourished on unending supplies of mutton and tarts, were treated with corresponding gratitude and affection. As Blanchard Jerrold recalled: "When Thackeray observed a child at play, he was touched by the natural flow of his movements and the natural philosophy underlying his prattle. Dickens put himself under the glossy plumes of the raven in the happy family and dwelt unctuously on the juiciness of the youngster's exposed calves."

the house of the publisher who was asked by his most famous author to do him a favour and bury the body of his five-year-old daughter. He does mention, however, a letter by Samuel Rogers saying that the corpse of Byron's *Allegro* was sent from Italy in two packages, that no one might suspect what it was". Does this, perhaps, count as a real secret at last?

In Belgravia the trail comes close to Lord Lucan's home but the murder is never mentioned, though a book about the Lucan affair is listed in the bibliography. The Georgi Markov umbrella-tip killing is briefly described, but on the whole Bushell is not greatly interested in modern ghost-free murders.

This reviewer, who nearly aban-

## The imperishable child

Jonathan Keates

PHILIP COLLINS (Editor)  
Thackeray: Interviews and Recollections  
Two volumes: 394pp. Macmillan. £15 each.  
0 333 26805 9

The Victorian literary community can be characterized as a formal dinner-party at an immense mahogany dining-table. At one end sits Tennyson, glowering and silent, gnawing a piece of mutton and listening to Browning (whose wife is feeding her spaniel with scraps under the table) and Trollope rapping at each other. Dickens is doing a series of quick-fire comic impersonations and the English agents are trying to reconcile a dish of boiled potatoes with the constipation from which they both suffer. Charlotte Brontë tries bravely not to be noticed, a saturnine Matthew Arnold plays with his spoon, George Eliot is a sympathetic listener and William Allingham is there noting everything down on his shirt cuff.

Paradoxically none of them is honestly enjoying himself, least of all that inveterate trencherman Thackeray. An air of increasingly dogged conviviality pervades Philip Collins's deftly assembled scrapbook of life-records and reminiscences and we can hardly be very surprised to find John Cordy Jeaffreson excusing his reference to the novelist's "broken constitution" with "Had his appetites—especially his appetite for the pleasures of the table—been under his control, I should not be justified in using so strong an expression." That they weren't explains both Thackeray's incredible charm of manner in company and that enduring failure of nerve which ultimately submerged his fictional artistry. Noise and omnium gatherum shielded him continually from confronting the singular nature of his talent, and anecdotal reminiscence is framed accordingly in a context of oyster-shells, sauce-boats and wine-coolers. The war correspondent "Billy" Russell recalls, for example, a Watford shooting party which was to have included Dickens, who cried off at the last moment, much to the hostess's chagrin. "The effect was unpleasant," Mrs X. fed along the hall, and the guests heard her calling to the cook, "Marta, don't roast the oranges; Mr Dickens isn't coming." Thackeray said he never felt so small. "There's a test of popularity for you! No oranges for Pendenhall!" George Augustus Sala sketches him at a Cornhill dinner (the guests included Millais, Landseer and G. H. Lewes) "as a post-prandial speaker . . . undoubtedly the reverse of felicitous". To another contemporary he confided, "at a big dinner I behave like a child. . . I can be admirably prudent, so long as there is no need for prudence; but with the first glass of champagne, away goes my prudence, and I must have something of whatever is going."

The child was imperishable. By the simple act of breaking Thackeray's nose in a Charterhouse playground scuffle, George Stovin Venables gave his myopic adversary that strange, bewitched, bewitching look which, the portrait, including his own self-

doned the book after what seemed the hundredth apparition, found his interest quickening as the author reached the Bank of England. It has two ghosts, but neither of them is the reviewer's ancestor, William Swiney Turner, who was acquitted in a sensational trial of embezzling £10,000 from the Bank. Despite the verdict, the affair was known as "Turner's Fraud". Surely he must have come back from time to time to haunt the director?

His father, Sir Bernard Turner, gave the order to fire on the London mob in Broad Street, during the Gordon Riots, a disciplinary exercise much admired by his descendants. Bushell ignores the Gordon Riots, which threatened to lay London waste, is there no ghostly crackle of musketry to be heard in Broad Street?

## Swift oscillations

Judith Davies

EDUENIO MONTALE  
The Second Life of Art: Selected Essays  
Edited and translated by Jonathan Galassi  
354pp. New York: Ecco Press.  
0 912946 84 9

It would not be easy (even if it were desirable) to try to fix the coordinates of Montale's literary criticism. Jonathan Galassi's selection spans a half-century, and some sense of process is natural. Readers who recall a comparable collection in translation, published in 1978, will be relieved to find the process made here more easily decipherable by the inclusion of publication details and notes: to set a writer in his historical context is not to confine but to release him. Montale himself has talked of his "oscillante modo di pensare, una lancetta che non sta mai ferma né sul bianco né sul nero"; but this is his customary modesty, and itself a form of intellectual self-respect. His essays are the product of a passionate, wise and discriminating cultural saturation; and it is difficult to regret the fact that journalism had to become for Montale—to use the title of one of his essays—"a second profession". These are densely written pieces, un-talented in the straightforwardness of their language, full of lightning cross-references, swift excursions into the fields of painting and music, and tending often to aphorism. Galassi's improves on previous translations of Montale in preserving something of a style which is non-academic and conversational, yet urgent and precise too.

As with all Montale's contemporaries, Croce's influence makes itself felt. In some essays, the early "Style and Tradition", for example, or "The Magnificent Destinies", Neapolitan idealism still faintly reverberates: the historical series tends to be seen as the self-explication of man's "destiny on earth", in which the responsible intellectual acts as monitor of change and link with tradition. "If automobiles were to disappear one day", Montale writes elsewhere, "what would remain as evidence of the automobile age would in fact be the poetry of today." Montale's critical terminology continues to attest the debt to Croce, though "Aesthetics and Criticism" (1962) is in the nature of a declaration of independence from Croce and responsibility by a philosopher who had made man the transmitting antenna of the Spirit, thus denying the guilt of the guilty as well as the merit of the artist.

There are pieces here on Pascoli, D'Annunzio and Campana, but there is nothing narrowly Italian about Montale (who has translated poets from Shakespeare to Yeats, and Quilén to Cavafy). For Montale the modern lyric tradition has travelled paths which wind, occasionally interesting, from the Byron of *Don Juan* to Baudelaire, and then on to the symbolists and Valéry; from Coleridge and "un certo Browning" via Hopkins to Yeats and the Imagists. Valéry, Pound and perhaps Eliot are the last milestones Montale feels fully able to identify (and for "Uncle Ez" there are reservations: a great poet "in flashes" but still one who "has gazed at himself too much in the mirror"). With Auden, in an essay of 1952, judgments are already becoming more provisional. But where Montale has doubts others have dogma; seldom is uncertainty so affirmative.

It is with Auden too that the occasional piece betrays an oblique self-confession. For what faintly gleams Montale is Auden's playing of "sine la lyra, not simply the harp of pure lyricism". Drawing threads together, one might conclude that what is meant by the Montalian term of "discrepancy" in poetry is the es sections on individual writers, including Emerson, Thoreau, Melville; Part 2 is arranged chronologically and thematically to include topics such as Fiction: 1900 to the 1930s, Black Literature and Foreign Scholarship.

*American Literary Scholarship: An Annual* (1981), edited by James Wood, has recently appeared (549pp, Durham, NC: Duke University Press: £37.75, 0 8223 0532 6). Part 1 comprises sections on individual writers, including Emerson, Thoreau, Melville; Part 2 is arranged chronologically and thematically to include topics such as Fiction: 1900 to the 1930s, Black Literature and Foreign Scholarship.

## Far-flung jottings

Denis Donoghue

EDMUND WILSON  
The Forties: From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period  
Edited by Leon Edel  
369pp. Macmillan. £14.95.  
0 333 21212 6

Edmund Wilson approved of the project of publishing his notebooks and diaries. *The Twenties* and *The Thirties* were printed from typescripts he made for that purpose. Since his death in 1972, the work of decade-scraping has continued. But there are signs of strain. *The Forties* is only about half the size of *The Thirties*, and it has had to be culled out with jottings for less substantial than laundry-bills. Wilson's diary-keeping was relentless till about 1935. When he started reading the material for *To the Finland Station*, he let the diary drift. Historical research, fiction, journalism and marriage to Mary McCarthy kept him too busy for regular meditation.

*To the Finland Station*, published in 1940, got the decade off to a fighting start: it was followed by *The Wound and the Bow* (1941), *Notebooks of Night* (1942), *Memoirs of Hecate County* (1946) — which made him famous and enabled him to afford a divorce — and *Europe without Baedeker* (1947). The diary was used mainly for jottings in far-flung places. In 1945 the *New Yorker* sent him to Europe to survey the consequences of the War: he went to London, Rome, Naples, Milan and Athens. His note-taking in these places was useful when he came to write up his stuff for the magazine and the book, *Europe without Baedeker*. In December 1947 the *New Yorker* sent him to New Mexico to report on the exotic religious ceremonies of the Zuni. In 1949 he went to Haiti for the *Reporter* and sent back a remarkably naive account of Haitian manners and morals. A revised version appeared, along with the Zuni

report, in *Red, Black, Blond and Olive* (1956). Visits to Tanglewood and, for divorce-residence, to Reno make up whatever gadding about enlivens *The Forties*; otherwise, the Wilsons stayed at home, enjoying the sensuous life at Wellfleet.

It is not clear how much editorial selection has been exercised in making *The Forties*. The diary gives more than I have longed to know about Wilson's sexual performances: presumably he recorded only the big hits. I don't know whether the diary-entry in which he tells of going to a concert in Carnegie Hall — Ruth Sossell was the soloist in Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto — is one of several such entries or the only one of its kind. "And as I watched the sawing motion of her pretty round arm always held away from her body", Wilson reports, "and saw the bow moving straight across the bridge and eliciting the sweet and tender and rather sentimental strains of the alleged first movement, I realized that violin music was intensely sexual and feminine, even when produced by a man, in the sense that it represents the feeling for a woman of the underpart of the penis lingeringly passing in and out and eliciting exquisite music."

The parties Wilson attended in Rome and other places sound authentically boring: many of the recorded conversations are so banal that I wonder how he disciplined himself to transcribe them. There are some new details. The "celebrated Catholic convert" who visited Santayana, according to *Europe without Baedeker*, turns out to be the same book as Sir Osmond Gower was Sir Ronald Storrs. But the jottings rarely add to what we already know from the books.

Besides, the most interesting bits have already been taken away for other compilations. *The Forties* were the decade of friendship between Wilson and Nabokov, but that matter is already fully accounted in Simon Karlinsky's edition of *The Nabokov-*

*Wilson Letters* (1979). Wilson's dealings with F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Peale Bishop, Allen Tate, Malcolm Cowley, Wyndham Lewis, Auden and other writers are indicated far more fully and clearly in Elena Wilson's selection of her husband's *Letters on Literature and Politics* (1977) than in *The Forties*.

Leon Edel, the editor of these decade-books, seems to have been intimidated by Wilson's well-publicized animadversions on heavy-duty editing. I can't otherwise explain why he has left so many details in the dark. One entry reads: "Stalin and Uban (?) See article in *Books Abroad*". Surely it is the editor's job, not mine, to dig out the relevant article in *Books Abroad* and explain Uban. Wilson didn't want to see professors engaging in unnecessarily heavy industry, but I don't recall that he wanted opaque details to be left in that condition. Nor do I think he favoured errors of transcription. Professor Edel has supplied evidence of an extremely damaging kind about his own textual work. He provides in *The Forties* a photo-copy of a page of hotel notepaper on which Wilson jotted down an account of his visit to a cinema in Miami. His transcription of this page is clearly inaccurate. Two words, "new" and "hung" — are omitted. The word "in" should be "on". A word he deems illegible is quite legible as "gags": "some good gags in this", Wilson says of a cartoon. A phrase Professor Edel transcribes as "like caricatures of the monstrous brass warehouses by Paul Manship and others in the Rockefeller Center buildings" doesn't make sense: "warehouses" is wrong, it should read "watchtowers". A tidied version of the same jottings became Wilson's letter of November 28, 1949, to his wife — she printed it in *Letters on Literature and Politics* — in which he refers to the cinema in Miami "decorated with big metallic mythological figures like the Paul Manship bas-reliefs on Rockefeller Center".

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## His Grace's disgraces

Robert Halsband

MARK BLACKETT-ORD  
Hell-Fire Duke: The Life of the Duke of Wharton  
252pp. Windsor: Kensal Press  
(distributed by Abacus Distribution Service). £12.50.  
0 946041 02 4

It is not surprising that the Duke of Wharton, who occupies several columns of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, should have been the subject of numerous biographies, fictional and factual. The first was published in 1731, the very year of his death; and its anonymous author, an "Impartial Hand", also described the duke accurately as "an illustrious, but a melancholly instance of the greatest Abilities and the most flagrant Indiscretions that ever met in the same Person".

Born in 1698, the heir of a powerfully rich Whig politician, he established his credentials for impudence by contracting a Fleet marriage at the age of seventeen to a fifteen-year-old girl of respectable enough family but not the grand heiress the world and his father thought he deserved. When his father died, soon afterwards, he found himself disinherited of all that was not entailed. He could still claim an ample enough income and the title of marquess. After a spell as a London rake, he went off on the Grand Tour. In Paris he was courted and seduced by the Jacobites, who were then recovering from their unsuccessful rising of 1715. He acknowledged his allegiance at Avignon when he knelt to accept the sovereignty of the Pretender (known to his followers as James III). As a reward he was given the empty and valueless promise of title to a dukedom. Back in London he resumed his rake's progress. After his mother's death, he inherited her estates in Ireland, where his Irish peerage allowed him to take his seat (though he was under age) in the House of Lords in Dublin — as a Whig. Either to stabilize his political loyalty or to reward his father posthumously the English ministry did create him Duke of Wharton. He was all of nineteen at the time.

In the early 1720s he was prominent

among the rakes of the Hell-Fire Club in London. When Wharton reached his majority he took his seat in the House of Lords as an Opposition Whig. There he opposed the bishops' bill against anti-religionists by reading from his family Bible to prove that the bill was repugnant to Holy Scripture. Then, before retiring to rustic Twickenham, he switched political allegiance to support the Court Whigs. He also became a Freemason — as a substitute for the Hell-Fire Club. In the curious opinion of Mark Blackett-Ord:

"His Twickenham neighbours included Pope and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Pope's genius, absorbing what he saw and heard, created the brilliant portrait in the moral essays beginning:

*Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our day  
Whose ruling passion was the lust of praise.  
(That theory is as good as any to explain the duke's instability.)* To describe his relationship with Lady Mary, Blackett-Ord invents a clumsy fiction when he writes that the duke and Lady Mary — in spite of her "famous unpleasant bodily odour" — "plunged into a tempestuous love-affair which was to last several years, but the details of which are sadly almost entirely unknown". She is called Wharton's mistress, who held the highest place in his affections, etc etc; and the biographer concludes: "So their lurid romance ended; sadly, for the details of it have been lost." To buttress this absurd concoction he writes that almost none of Lady Mary's letters from this period survive, overlooking the full series she wrote to her sister from 1721 to 1727, from which in fact he quotes:

"After the Twickenham interlude Wharton continued his gyrating political career, while his financial resources, severely depleted by losses in the South Sea Bubble, dwindled. In the House of Lords he defended the Jacobite cause, who was sentenced to exile. And two years later he himself made his way to Vienna in a foolish attempt to entice the Emperor Charles VI to the Jacobite cause. Then, after a spell at the Pretender's court in Rome, he was sent to Madrid, where he openly acted as ambassador. He pursued the chimerical notion that an alliance of Spain, Austria and Russia could put the Pretender on the English throne."

His wife in England having died, he

soon fell in love and married an Irish lady-in-waiting to the Spanish Queen, but had to become a Roman Catholic first. Whether in politics or in religion he converted easily. The English government was remarkably patient and sanguine in hoping that the errant duke might be reclaimed, but when he enlisted in the Spanish army to take part in the siege of Gibraltar (where he was wounded in the foot), enough was enough: he was indicted for high treason.

For the last three years of his miserable existence he wandered over Europe, trusted by neither the Jacobites nor the English, and destitute because his English agents were forbidden to remit any funds. He died at the age of thirty-two, and his wasted life was neatly summed up by Horace Walpole: "Philip, Duke of Wharton . . . comforted all the grave and dull, by throwing away the brightest profusion of parts on witty fooleries, debaucheries, and scrapes, which may mix graces with a great character, but never can compose one."

If Wharton's place in political history that of a freak, in literary history he plays a very small part. He served as the involuntary model for Pope's dazzling satiric portrait. He himself wrote some fugitive verse and a set of political essays in *The True Briton*, in 1723-24, supporting the Opposition. He may also have provided Edward Young, whom he patronized for a time, with some touches for *Lorenzo* in *Night Thoughts*. Blackett-Ord also suggests that Samuel Richardson, who printed *The True Briton*, may have used some details from Wharton for the character of Lovelace.

Mark Blackett-Ord's main virtue as a biographer lies in his use of unpublished letters in various archives, mainly the extensive Stuart Papers at Windsor Castle. He quotes from them more profitably than Lewis Benjamin did in his 1913 biography. Against this must be balanced his careless and cavalier use of sources, replete with misprints and eccentric name-spelling and his exaggerated and surmise in the absence of factual evidence. Occasionally he descends from biography to unsolicited historical fiction, and sometimes produces patches of elegant writing. Altogether an erratic biography that echoes its subject's erratic life.



## Faulty connections

R. J. Overy

PETER YOUNG

Power of Speech: A History of Standard Telephones and Cables 1883-1983

221pp. Allen and Unwin. £9.95. £9.95. 0 04 382039 5

In 1876 Alexander Bell invented the telephone. Three years later the first public telephone exchange was set up in central London. In 1883 the American Western Electric Company set up a branch in Moorgate to market the telephone under the management of J. E. Kingsbury, a quiet Englishman with little technical training but a passion for telephones. It is the centenary of this company, Standard Telephones and Cables, that Peter Young celebrates in his densely detailed narrative.

It is difficult to make company histories exciting at the best of times, and this one is no exception. To be fair to the author, the book moves at a good pace, almost too fast indeed for all the detail to be properly absorbed. But any signs of life in the narrative are extinguished by the nature of the subject and the narrow focus of the book. Coastal cables and superheterodyne receivers can only hold our attention for so long; so too can the stream of potted biographies of STC executives, many of whom, to judge by their business record, have been recalled here from a merciful oblivion. Nor is the rather arid subject-matter helped by the style in which Mr Young has

chosen to present it. The book is far too condensed for easy reading, bustling the reader along through a catalogue of undigested facts and figures. We are flooded with technical information and jargon that has not been properly explained, and have to put up with brief and often inept asides to place STC or telephones in their historical context. Here is the author's explanation for the boom in telephone demand in the 1960s: "External circumstances had changed in [the company's] favour. The effect of the Street Offences Act 1959 was to take prostitutes off the streets and put them on the phone, ushering in the permissive society of the Swinging Sixties."

All this is to be regretted, for this is an interesting story which raises numerous unexplored questions. Western Electric was one of a number of firms that prospered on the growing demand for telephones, but the British branch was one of the least successful of its multi-national ventures, reflecting the generally slow growth of electronics in Britain before 1914. In the 1920s the company was taken over by the newly formed International Telephone and Telegraph Company (ITT), the brainchild of the remarkable Behn, Meyer, Son & Co. and Sons. Under its new title, STC continued to grow (with a sharp setback during the Depression) on the basis of Post Office business, which gave a guaranteed market to the big electrical firms for cable and exchange. The business fortunes of the company were mixed, despite the benefits of having a large monopolist customer. The war helped, but it also encouraged excessive diversification, with the result that during the 1950s the

weaker product divisions dragged down the overall performance of the company, facing it with a serious crisis by the late 1950s.

The crisis also reflected the basic conservatism of STC's management. Although the firm was clearly part of a "new" industry, it was infected with all the poor salesmanship, stuffy managerial attitudes, poor quality research and inefficient organization of the older, declining industries. When the energetic H. S. Gensen was appointed president of ITT in 1959 he ordered a complete shake-up of STC, to make it operate like an American corporation. Aptitude tests were introduced for top British managers (only two "passed"), financial criteria were ruthlessly enforced, and the company was compelled to shed its conservative image and adopt more aggressive marketing and modern methods of production and organization. The problems this posed were enormous. It is clear from Young's account that it took almost ten years for STC to adapt successfully to these pressures, by which time it had been overtaken in the main area of telephone equipment by GEC and Plessey.

In the 1970s the better attention to research and the trimmer, more sales-orientated structure, produced a sharp upward turn in STC's fortunes. It was able to benefit from the transition from electromechanical to electronic switching in the telephone system, and pioneered the new TXEA and System X equipment for the Post Office. STC is now a business capable of taking its place in the Brave New World of Britain's market-place economy. To underline the change, ITT has recently sold its controlling

interest in STC to British shareholders to make it even more competitive with native British firms.

This history raises a number of interesting points. One of the most remarkable is the long time that it took for the telephone to spread in Britain. By 1914 there were twice as many telephones per head of population in Hawaii than in Britain. By the 1920s and 30s the telephone was still a luxury enjoyed by only a small part even of the middle classes. The Post Office and its supplier firms seem always to have been chasing the demand for telephones and never catching up. STC contributed to this with its slow pace of research and unadventurous business attitudes. In an age when nationalized industries are blamed for everything it is salutary to read the story of a large private firm just as culpable of technical mis-judgment, inefficiency

(brought about partly by the desire to protect a loyal but top numerous workforce), and managerial incompetence.

The same could not be said of the parent company, ITT. There are some interesting stories here of the agony and the ecstasy of multi-nationalism. In 1948 the ITT manager in Czechoslovakia was arrested by the new Communist authorities as an American spy and subsequently hanged. British and American personnel were arrested in Budapest and given long prison sentences for sabotage and espionage. STC's history has, regrettably, been much less exciting. Its new managing director, Kenneth Corfield, announced in the 1970s that his company "should aim to be the best company to work for in this country". On the evidence of this centenary history it can only get better.

## End of the road

Jeremy Hardie

IVAN FALLON and JAMES SRODES

DeLorean: The rise and fall of a dream-maker  
418pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95. 0 241 11087 4

As this excellent book makes plain - and it is much to the credit of the publisher's bold libel lawyers that it should have appeared - John DeLorean was, by the time he came to build his dream car, megalomaniac, incompetent and insatiably greedy for cash. Ivan Fallon and James Srodes have done a magnificent job of detective work, and they succeed in making the technicalities clear in their full detail without slowing down the narrative of what is, in the end, an adventure story - a rare achievement for a book about business.

By the time he was arrested in a Los Angeles airport hotel on a charge of drug-smuggling, DeLorean had succeeded in costing the British Government £85 million and other, equally gullible, US private investors \$27m, of which nearly \$18m went into a Geneva company for purposes which remain doubtful. There was never any chance that the project would succeed. The market for an expensive sports-car was not really there in times of economic stringency and energy-saving. DeLorean's original fantasies, to embody his then current mad for safety and economy in a magnificent new vehicle with the 1930s appeal of the famous Mercedes Gullwing, had disappeared by the time the first test of assembled machines rolled off the line in Belfast. The first cars to arrive in the United States were described thus by Dick Brown, head of Quality Assurance: "It looked like somebody put a hand grenade in the front seat and the back seat and then set them off. All the guts were out. You could not ride in them. You looked in the window and all the components were just stuffed in. They were not built in, they were stuffed in." Almost all DeLorean's ideas had proved impracticable, certainly within the preposterous short time-table which he left himself between the hasty signing of the deal with Roy Mason, in 1978, and his promised first delivery dates in 1980.

Could it all have been foreseen? It is quite easy to produce a ranking of the participants to show who were the most culpable. First, by a long way, before dinner, with Roy Hattersley, the politician, who in a five-minute meeting peremptorily required the excellent John Freeman, Deputy Chairman of the Northern Ireland Development Association, to sign up at once, whatever his prudent doubts might be; and Adam Butler, whose House of Commons answers to the penetrating questions of Bob Cryer and Jack Bruce-Gardyne now make sad and/or comic reading. There is an excellent photograph in the book showing Roy Mason sitting like a delighted small boy in the glamorous new car, while DeLorean stands over him smiling with shared pleasure at the machine and at the extraordinary son-think which he was still hanging to pull off.

The photographs indeed are among the best things in the book. If you want to ask yourself whether you would buy a brand-new car from this man, you have only to look at the 1973 photograph of a manically youthful DeLorean, with hair dyed jet-black, and his jaw jutting out from the prominent wire-frame which a Swiss surgeon had put in during his face-lift. Accountants, management consultants and other such unimaginative people, who are paid to examine facts rather than fantasy, come out of the story very well. Bankers do rather poorly: they have quite sharp things to say about whether the deal made any sense at all, but the DeLorean and his henchmen they must have found it very difficult to resist the large sums of money involved. Although their fees and commissions are of course entirely above board, it must have been difficult to look coldly at deals where, for raising a net \$16 million, you earned \$2 million in fees.

But perhaps when it all went wrong was in the last two or three years of DeLorean's time at General Motors. A gauche and uncommunicative man, he took to a fashionable Californian lifestyle, combined with Ralph Nader-type criticism of the wickedness of the automotive industry, the need for safety, and other such nostrums. General Motors seem to have been remarkably tolerant; they even promoted him. It is characteristic of the motor-car business both here and in the United States that the final straw was not any grave commercial mistake, or sexual misdemeanour, or misuse of funds by DeLorean, but the pettiness of releasing to the press the automobile industry which was meant to be kept strictly confidential to the inner circle of General Motors' executives. Had General Motors at that moment said to the world that DeLorean was to use the phrase of one of them later, "funky, you know. He has just plain flipped out", all the subsequent problems might never have happened. As it was, he was bought off at huge expense; and the press in the United States was able to continue to pretend that DeLorean was a brilliant engineer whose innovative social and commercial ideas had simply been too much for stuffy old General Motors. In fact, General Motors were 100 per cent right, and had they told the world why the British tax-payer would today be some £85 million better off.

The DeLorean venture was a complete fiasco from beginning to end. There was never any chance that the car would be manufactured in the quantities and to the quality required, nor that it would sell at the price planned in the numbers required to achieve profitability. Almost every aspect of the venture was badly administered by a man who quickly lost all interest in attempting to make it work, and delegated what he should have been doing himself to a brilliant but ad hoc consortium of Lotus, Cars and miscellaneous "recruits" in Belfast and Norfolk. It must be the most ill-conceived enterprise in the whole history of business, or for that matter of government.

## Sitting tight in the Provost's Lodge

Noël Annan

MICHAEL COX

M. R. James: An Informal Portrait  
268pp. Oxford University Press.  
£14.50. 0 19211765 3

It seems now to be obligatory in writing about a bachelor to call him a spinster. Whether the paradox is all that bold is open to doubt, but the epithet was used by that staunch liberal, Mr Bernard Levin, when reviewing the life of M. R. James, the author of the celebrated ghost stories, who presided over two institutions, Eton and King's, Mr Levin found much to dislike in him. James opposed degrees for women, despised science, supported the retention of Greek as a Cambridge entry requirement, was repelled by Fischer von Erlach's masterpiece of German baroque, considered Irish Home Rule incomprehensible and never had an idea in his life. And yet mysteriously he had hosts of friends and was renowned for his genuine affection and sympathy for the young at a time when it was still common form for the old to snub them or keep them at the distance deference demanded. Such was his appeal to the young that the thirteen-year-old Jo Grimond, slightly tipsy after being pilled by the Provost with port, remembered his Provost as more redoubtable a personality than either Churchill or de Gaulle. Bewildering.

In M. R. James: An Informal Portrait Michael Cox shows convincingly, I think, why it was not all that bewildering. Monty James inherited a distrust of ideas. His father was a country parson and, despite having been at Eton, was an Evangelical. Not a horrible Evangelical like Trollope's Mr Slope or Mr Stumford, who caused rift in their parishes by dividing their congregations into those who served God (evangelical) and those who did not (all other persuasions). He was the kind of noble Evangelical who hated religious controversy and followed Henry Venn's maxim, "Never, on any account, dispute. Debate is the work of the flesh." Monty James was brought up not to question things at a time when religious speculation was at its height; and his refusal later to take Holy Orders when his friends expected him to do so may have reflected his reluctance to ask himself what exactly he did believe. He might also have wondered (which Sidney Smith would not have done) whether some of his more agreeable social gifts, such as his delectable power of mimicry and a talent for strumming and singing cockney music-hall songs, were quite those which people would expect from a clergyman. This dislike of intellectual discussion, and mastery of mimicry and parlour games, was notable in another College and son of an Evangelical bishop - Ronald Knox.

All his life James was conservative and anti-intellectual. Hearing at one of his evenings some undergraduates discussing general ideas, he rapped the table with his pipe and with a shade of irony said "No thinking, gentlemen, please!" At the time of his election as Provost of King's, E. M. Forster's mentor, Nathaniel Wedd, went around saying "We don't want James. James doesn't care for the intellect." Nor is it surprising that James took against the young Turk, Maynard Keynes, even though he was an Etonian. Keynes was to upset him by moving what were in effect votes of no confidence in the financial administration of the College. Even one of his closest friends, A. C. Benson, who said in the way some friends have, that James had the mind of a nice child, forecast that just as he had had no policy as Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, so he would have none as Provost. Policy meant rows and unseemly disputes.

Isn't it shocking? Should not all dons be dedicated to pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, pursuing the argument whithersoever it leads, and passing on the love of speculation to the young? Isn't it justice that when the name James is mentioned it is his famous contemporary and namesake, whose Turn of the Screw is even more unsettling than any of Monty's ghost stories, that first comes to mind?

It is indeed, but these edifying

reflections omit certain facts. James did in fact plough and sow a field of knowledge. Aton found that in Germany the young James was rated the third or fourth scholar in the world in medieval manuscripts, and Professor Pfaff judged that nearly all later research rested on James's catalogues. Since he was more of an antiquary than a historian the range of his commentaries was limited, but it could hardly have been otherwise since the number of texts he edited or calendared was so enormous. James's forte was British Museum scholarship - the analysis of evidence about an object and the meticulous unravelling of the data relevant to it - and such scholarship, or his editing of the books of the Apocrypha, are subjects of research with limited appeal for intellectuals. Still, they are no more useless than pure mathematics, which intellectuals always say they admire.

Mr Levin was incensed by the fact that James was always proclaiming his reluctance to take on the jobs he was offered yet when his chance of becoming Provost was threatened he did not hesitate to use his elbows. Cox shows that the facts do not support this criticism. Lewis Dickinson led a group who asked first Prothro, at that time a

fell vacant he accepted the offer without misgiving. Certainly Eton was the place which meant most to him. It was there that he had first begun to collect rare books and tangle with the Apocrypha; and when he returned, his tutor Luxmoore was still there to greet him. He was the first Provost to throw open the Cloisters to young masters and boys alike. Nor was he devoid of social spirit. In the worst days of the Depression, when Robert Birley and his wife ran a soup kitchen in Slough, he sent him fifty pounds and told him that was exactly what an Eton master ought to be doing.

A horrid thing happened to Mr Cox when writing this book. In 1980 a definitive life and assessment of James's work as a medievalist appeared by the American scholar, R. W. Pfaff. Cox was right to press on. Pfaff's book is a monument to James, authoritative, masterly in its lengthy assessment of James's work on manuscripts, well-versed in tribal lore and setting the ghost stories, where they properly belong, in second place to the medieval studies. Pfaff's is the book to consult if one wants to know what James achieved as a scholar. Cox's if one wants to judge what sort of a man he was, the genial scholar with the fear of anything which was not in the best of taste. I was brought up by my father, who revered his Provost, to read Eton and King's, and I still find it full of funny stories though I am sad to learn it was too bland for Lytton Strachey. Had I been at that time a young Fellow I suppose I would have voted with Lewis Dickinson against James's election as Provost; but I hope I would have had the grace when he resigned to write as Wedd did to thank him for having been for twenty years "the soul of the place, the chief inspiration of the things that make King's better to live in than other places."

In these brisk days it is hardly surprising to find Monty James written off as uninteresting, second-rate, imprisoned by little rituals and planning improvements to ancient buildings, recasting the form of celebrations, the child of privilege and father of reaction, adopted and loaded with honours by the Establishment, managerially a failure, a master only of patience and crosswords, a prude who voted (in a minority) against Haldane when he appealed against his dismissal as a reader in biochemistry on grounds of adultery. Is he not the kind of man whom Martin Wiener thinks is responsible for the decline of Britain and the industrial spirit?

But stay... what is this indecent thought which steals across the mind and stings confection? In the years when this Mornington Post was edited how was it that King's became distinguished intellectually? In economics there were Pigou and Keynes; in that new subject, economic history, Clapham; Webster made his name in diplomatic history and Dent in musicology; Barcroft researched into oxygen in blood and Gray began to give zoology an entirely new dimension; Inglis, the engineer, invented among other things his bridge; in classics there were Waldstein in archaeology, the young Adeock "FRESH" from Wilmowitz's seminar in history and Sheppard, who was to be the most remarkable character and Provost of the century, being omitted from the DNB only by Oxonian prejudice - how did they and the Rupert Brooke generation emerge if (or) was the order of the day in the Lodge? Can it be that dynamic leadership by Provosts, forward-looking and alert, skilled in rationalization and the arts of committee work, hatching sapient policies, inspired by high ideals and willing to draft and redraft new Statutes to keep the College abreast of the times, is less effective in providing a *Spiralium* for intellectuals than sitting tight and cultivating friends? Such a reflection rots the roots both of the technocratic managerial society which is honoured in the 1980s and the notions of promoting educational equality which were current in the 1960s. But how can this be the case? If so disturbing and painful a thought were seriously to be entertained, it could well subvert law and order and our notions of social justice.

His expressions of unworthiness were not insincere: they came from his Evangelical upbringing. He believed what he said. He would have preferred to be a scholar without having to take on the chores of a don. But he needed the money for travel and his research and came to realize what he could contribute to the life of the College. A. C. Benson's prediction was right. James had no managerial gifts and was a poor director of an individual, unimaginative and uninterested in running a museum; and as Provost he disliked College business committees and policy. He found, for instance, Nixon's habit of moving amendments to every motion wearing - on one occasion Nixon spoke interminably in favour of his amendment, then asked leave to reply to it and voted against his own motion. But Monty James could be determined when he chose. He would ride roughshod over regulations if their enforcement led to manly spirited treatment of an individual. Oscar Browning might say spiteful things about him but he saw to it that Browning got a generous pension. In the years before the First World War, however, he sensed that King's was changing, and a new generation of ungodly iconoclasts would return after the war, the one post which he had no doubt he would like, nor much doubt that he would make a success of, was the Provostship of Eton; and when it



M. R. James in 1909

## Along new lines

Sidney Pollard

PATRICK O'BRIEN (Editor)

Railways and the Economic Development of Western Europe 1830-1914

243pp. Macmillan/St Antony's. £25. 0 333 33000 5

Time was when historians could assert without fear of contradiction that railways were the most significant single economic phenomenon of the nineteenth century. They were responsible for the obvious cheapening and speeding-up of traffic, which in turn permitted the mass production of industrial goods and the opening-up of the grain-growing American West, so providing the dynamic of national and international specialization - what today would be called the forward linkages. They had a similarly powerful influence on the growth of the engineering and ironmaking industries (the backward linkages), as well as on the introduction of new financial and organizational structures, the mobilization of fresh capital from formerly isolated savers, and the vast expansion of international lending. Not least, and rather like the motor-car in our own century, railways could be said to have widened labour markets, to have introduced new classes to travelling over longer distances, and to have affected the shape of cities and the forms of living.

This consensus was shattered from all places, the United States, where railways were believed to have been even more central to economic development than elsewhere. Spear-headed by the work of Fogel (1964) and Fishlow (1965), to name the present volume is dedicated to a whole new literature developed to question both the approach and the conclusion of the established tradition. In the process, a new branch of the subject, the "New Economic History", was developed; and its first victim was the old belief about the railways.

If railways were indeed so important, argued Fogel, then it ought to be possible to assign some measure to their significance. Let us assume that in one year, towards the end of the nineteenth century when the American railway system was well established, it was suddenly removed or made

inoperable: what would the additional costs have been of transporting the same quantity of goods by the next best alternative - in this case mostly the canals? The difference, called the "social savings", would be the true measure of the significance of the railways in the American economy. It turned out, after elaborate calculations, that the difference was very small indeed, and that the traditional view had thus been in error.

Needless to say, the new views have not met with universal acceptance. There have been objections at a high level of abstraction: how legitimate is it to transfer cost-benefit analysis from planning for the future, for which it was designed, to alternatives in the past; in other words, how legitimate are hypothetical calculations for a past which never happened? Are historians really interested in alternatives? For example, is the significance of Napoleon to be measured by the difference between his actions and those of his most likely substitute - say, Murat - if he had been killed by a stray shot early in his campaigns?

There are also questions as to detail. Why were only freight (what) costs calculated, and not passenger fares, where the gap against the canal alternative is usually greater? Have the costs of grazing the additional horses to be used in the imaginary expanded canal system been correctly estimated? The list of such questions is endless, and Fogel's explanation, that his was an upper limit of social savings, and that most of the objections would lead to even lower results, was true only in part. Above all, he left out the dynamic aspects - the learning process - of railway building in progressive economies.

Nevertheless, the New Economic History has had many admirers; and imitators have applied Fogel-type calculations to other countries. A number of them met in Madrid in December 1979, and the papers they read there are now before the public in the volume under review. It is not clear why it took almost four years to get them published; still less why they had to be reproduced by a photocopying which leaves unjustified right-hand margins, they have to be read at a high price. Most of the results presented here have long since been published elsewhere - the Spanish and Belgian ones are to be published shortly - so that there is little that is truly new in the book. Nevertheless, it

is useful to have these papers, with their attempts to answer the same questions for six European countries: England with Wales, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Spain.

The outstanding conclusion is the diversity of the European experience. The fact that social savings rates are shown to have varied from 2.5 per cent of national income to 18.5 per cent is not merely because different authors have used different methods of calculation; it is also because different economies had different transport needs, different alternatives of coastal shipping or river and canal navigation, and had reached different stages of development when railways were introduced. Here, indeed, is a key variable: it has eluded most single-country historians but emerges as dominant in the comparisons made possible here.

In Britain, the pioneer, with her slowly evolving industrialization, railway investment was induced by the promise of private profits - the State was passive. Elsewhere, the State had to intervene, because, at least in the more advanced countries, social returns were higher than private ones, which might not on their own have supported an adequate amount of railway construction. The effects of railways obviously differ according to whether the capital is native or imported; whether an organized capital market existed beforehand or not; whether there is a healthy iron industry (the evidence which can be expanded as a result of the new demand; whether native or foreign engineers and entrepreneurs build the lines; whether their justification ultimately is economic or strategic/political. Gianni Toniolo, in an interesting dissenting paper here, points out further that in economies that were backward when railways were imposed on them, it has to be assumed that, typically, much of the labour was underemployed on the land, and much of the potential capital idle. Opportunity costs therefore have no meaning, and the whole apparatus of social savings calculations is inapplicable.

The formulas used here, therefore, are at best only a first step, applicable in each case to a single country. For western Europe as a whole, something much more differentiated, with a stronger historical dimension, is required. There is only the barest hint in these pages that the authors understand this need.



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# The question of impartiality

Geoffrey Marshall

MAURICE PUNCH (Editor)  
Control in the Police Organization  
346pp. MIT Press. £27.  
0 262 16090 0

Police studies, it seems to be agreed, are not in a very advanced or satisfactory state. Perhaps it is an act of faith for academics to suppose that there are sensible things to be said about policing or "the police organization" in general, particular societies. Nevertheless, sociologists at least have not been deterred from assuming that police sociology is as much subject for inquiry as industrial sociology or the sociology of education. For one reason or another, however, many sociological studies of policing have focused on individual police behaviour or on relations between police officers, or with the public, rather than on police command structures or larger-scale questions of organization or control.

Maurice Punch has here edited the proceedings of an international seminar held in the Netherlands in 1980 that did concentrate on questions of control, posing the query "How do police forces police themselves?" Professor Punch has arranged the papers into several groups. They fall more or less under two headings. One group offers information about the operational or managerial techniques of particular forces - eg the reduction of firearms use in New York, Atlanta and Kansas City, or the handling of assault charges in a British police force. The other raises issues that are perhaps of more interest to political scientists about the proper objectives of police forces and their relation to the societies in which they operate.

## Youthful misdemeanours

D. J. West

MASUD HOGHUGH  
The Delinquent: Directions for Social Control  
317pp. Burnett. £15 (paperback).  
26.95  
0 09 15068 8

This informative review of delinquency studies, culled by an assertive style and provocative commentary, derives from the author's dual role of lecturer and practitioner. The arguments seem on occasion more colourful than consistent. When not due to a certain fondness for hyperbole, the inconsistencies arise in part from an attempt to accommodate contradictory views and evidence while preserving a judicious, right-of-centre stance on most controversial issues. But they also stem from the fact, of which Masud Hoghugh reminds us repeatedly, that delinquency is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes requiring a variety of responses. It is not altogether unreasonable, therefore, to argue in one place (p. 29) that retributive punishment is "maybe the least effective and the most costly" means of reducing delinquency, while asserting later on (p. 280) that "judicial punishment is essential."

Hoghugh has a low regard for professional expertise, much of which is of the "emperor's clothes" variety, having no more substantial justification than lay opinion. He contends that undue respect for experts has discouraged politicians and ordinary citizens from asserting commonsense approaches. He forgets the prevalence of venal, indiscriminating and media-dominated public attitudes, although elsewhere he waxes eloquent on the role of the media and of politicians in fomenting public anxiety with sensational rhetoric. He goes too far in proposing a drastic reduction in the number of professionals - social workers, probation officers, criminologists, institution staff, etc. - who need criminals as sources of livelihood. Delinquents have to be handled by

Some questions of the second kind are: Through what kinds of institution should police forces be controlled or monitored? How can the effective conduct of police operations be reconciled with the maintenance of civil liberties when crime of all kinds is increasing? And how can policing be responsive to democratic control but independent of improper political influence?

Some of the comparative material suggests that cross-national generalizations can be dangerous. David Bayley offers the fascinating information that in Japan accused persons are induced to co-operate not by threats but by invoking feelings of mutual obligation. On occasion it appears that this system of organized police un-brutality, like its Western counterpart, can go too far. The Japanese Supreme Court found in one case that improper influence had been brought to bear on a suspect when the chief of a police station visited him and washed his back in the bath. The interpersonal reciprocal obligation created was so great that the suspect was deemed to have had no choice but to confess. Advocates of community policing in Britain have never gone to these extremes, and in any event it is just possible that such techniques would be less effective in *Textelh* or Greater Manchester.

The Dutch contributors report that in 1975 some radical reflection about the nature of the police function took place in the report of a Project Group on Organization. The group asked itself how the police could be integrated into the Community and serve society in a non-repressive role. Some of the Group's recommendations were for more use of internal police advisory groups. In Britain a milder philosophy of police/public integration has pointed in the direction of external consultative and advisory groups. But the limits of

consultation about operational policing remain to be worked out and have become something of an issue between the political left and right in British politics.

The notion of integrating police with the community indeed throws up a conflict between critical theorists of the police role and what for want of a better name may be called even more critical theorists. What the even more critical theorists tend to think about integration is that the police are already integrated but with the wrong bits of the community. Some who think this also think it inevitable, or at any rate natural, that the police in Western capitalist societies should hold repressive or conservative views. This implication might conceivably be drawn from Robert Reiner's paper, "The Politicization of the Police in Britain".

The argument of this essay is worth examining because Reiner has done valiant work in British police sociology and knows what he is talking about. Note the less it is possible that the even more critical theorists could mistakenly use his work to make an unwarranted critical leap. They may take it as intended to refute the traditional claims made by senior British police officers that in enforcing the law they act impartially and without regard to political or partisan considerations or governmental convenience. Whether or not this claim is false, Reiner does not purport to show that it is.

His argument runs like this. Policing in Britain has become politicized for the following reasons. In the first place demonstrations, urban riots and terrorist activities are "informed by an explicit political consciousness". Second, routine street-level policing has become politically controversial. Third, police accountability has become a major party political issue

and has been the subject of proposed legislation. Fourth, the police have become actively engaged as a pressure-group in questions of social policy.

The first three suggestions amount to saying that rioters and demonstrators act from political motives, that some groups in society now regard the police with political hostility and that some politicians wish to bring them under greater political control. None of these propositions bears on the question of possible political or partisan activity or beliefs held by the police, since all of them relate to beliefs held by others about them. Whether police activity itself is political, Reiner continues, depends on the meaning to be attached to the term "political" and the way in which we define politics. He cites two definitions which he labels Politics II and Politics I. Politics II is a narrow sense which relates to the special machinery of government and administration. In this sense the police are political but that tells us trivially that they are a part of the administrative system. Politics I is a wider sense. It means "the exercise of constraint in any relationship". In this sense the police are "inherently and inescapably political". But in this sense all-in wrestling, or Wormwood Scrubs, or Bristol University are inescapably political, so politicization in these senses tells us nothing to the discredit of the police and has no relevance to their neutrality or partisanship. It is a third sense of politics, namely an inclination to political bias in carrying out their law-enforcement duties that is the relevant sense of politics for which evidence is required by those who dispute claims of police impartiality.

They may seek it in two further sets of considerations here mentioned. One is the possibility that the claim to impartial application of the law is true

but is only formally true, since rules are open-ended and their application involves discretion. The undisputed existence of such discretion of course tells us nothing directly about the way that discretion is exercised and Reiner adduces no evidence about it. What he does say is that a turning-point in police behaviour took place when Sir Robert Mark delivered his Dimsbley Lecture and later followed it with outspoken criticisms of Labour Party policy towards the police. This was followed by explicit Police Federation appeals to candidates at the 1979 General Election for stronger penal policies. The meaning of politicization then is that police are part of the machinery of administration; that their activities involve constraint; that they exercise a measure of discretion in law enforcement; that a retired Police Commissioner has socially conservative views; and that the Police Federation has openly expressed hard-line penal policies, and is opposed to crime and in favour of more and better-paid policemen. So clearly, whatever the truth may be about the official law-enforcement behaviour of non-retired Chief Constables and their subordinates, these conclusions say nothing about it and cannot be intended to provide evidence about the way in which law is enforced, or to show that enforcement has become politicized in the Politics II sense.

Much sociological investigation of policing in Europe and North America is in fact at odds with the assertion of some critical theorists that policing is invariably repressive and inescapably right-wing social policies. Many of the contributors to this book suggest that police forces can become aware of their patterns of customary behaviour and change them. The study of police is a kind of political anthropology and one of its functions is to tell the police what their customs are.

# The work of retrieval

Patrick Maynard

MICHAEL PODRO  
The Critical Historians of Art  
257pp. Yale University Press. £15.  
03002862 8

In a significant passage quoted in Michael Podro's new book (one of more than ninety translations in the text with extensive quotations from the German originals in the notes), the young Heinrich Wölfflin wrote, apparently to Burckhardt, about his ambitions on finishing his doctoral degree. He outlined a project for what Professor Podro calls a "critical or interpretative history" of art, based on a psychological approach rather than on that of philology or general cultural history. "What can be achieved through philological methods is shown by archaeology. Someone who can combine archaeology with the other enterprise will achieve a great deal," he wrote: something that may be called science.

Besides Wölfflin, who features in two of its central chapters, *The Critical Historians of Art* treats of the diverse projects of seven other German-speaking art historians who, according to Podro, form the core of a distinctive art-historical tradition of "strong internal coherence", stretching back almost to Hegel - who figures as a proto-critical historian - and forward to Panofsky, with whom it ends. The tradition, spanning roughly a century, includes both illustrious and less well-known names: Schnaase, Semper and Göller, Springer, Riegl, Wölfflin, Warburg, and Panofsky. The book is structured on a three-square grid, covering (roughly) three generations, three critical historical projects (that focus on teleology, on motifs, and (at some distance) on social history (under the inspiration of Schiller)).

At times it is questionable how well this grid organizes the discussions the

book contains. *Critical Historians* is as its author states early on, an essay in the history of ideas, and tends to be relaxed about biographical details. Göller, for example, is given only a publication date, whereas Springer enjoys several dates just for his birth. One gets a firm sense of three generations of thought culminating in the 1890s, but the nonspecialist will find the chronological marking insufficient, as attention is given to many seemingly fresh starts on subtle points of interpretation of the specific projects pursued by individual art historians, of their philosophical predecessors, such as Kant, Schiller, Herder, and Hegel. To borrow one of Wölfflin's famous polarities, despite some dauntingly efforts at firm outline, one is engaged here with a predominantly painterly handling of ideas. Like the edge of a face in a Rembrandt etching he discusses, the contours of Podro's discussion may prove elusive, as themes disappear and recur in slight, deft touches throughout his expositions of particular texts.

A central theme is that of critical history itself, which Podro opposes to "archaeological" history of art in a distinction echoing Wölfflin's own. The term "critical" is meant to have a Kantian, self-critical ring - not, as might be supposed, to signify a disposition to judicial evaluation. The general project of this modern critical approach, for which Podro finds many parallels outside German Letters, is an understanding of art which combines what appear to sceptics as two incompatible motivations. The first of these is - in defiance of well-known versions of formalism, from Kant down to the present - to represent works of art as fully historical creatures, "inextricable," as Podro says, from the feltwork complexity of circumstance: patronage, usage, technique, religious beliefs, etc. The second is to treat artworks as always "irreducible" to any such set of historical circumstances. But this negative condition is not sufficient to distinguish the critical

approach from the "archaeological" one, for it might be satisfied by a modest "archaeological" programme which did not propose to give insightful interpretations of its subjects as works of art. Podro's critical historian must satisfy a third requirement of elaborating and applying an "allgemeinen Standpunkt" - some very general and inclusive conception of art which regards works of art as effects of artistry, separate from natural objects and other artifacts. Although listed as a critical historian and much discussed along the way, Burckhardt, for example, receives no separate treatment in the book, perhaps because of his weakness on this point.

Critical history thus requires the critical creativity of the theorist, as well as the understanding and skills of the scholar. The problem of devising and applying any such general and inclusive conception of art is the problem of the critical "retrieval" of works of art from history, a "retrieval" which may, in the case of Wölfflin for example, tend towards formalism but which, according to the requirement of "inextricability," must never lapse into it.

Podro makes the interesting suggestion that the solution of this problem was thought to lie in the elaboration of different conceptions of visual artistry, which link all art, whether fine, applied, or decorative, to the exercise of the mind's freedom; as well as from internal restraints, as seen from those imposed by nature and society. This Kantian idea is incorporated in a general conception of the entire Western tradition of art which views artistry as (in a term most important to Podro) the active "transformation" of given materials, conventions, and experiences. Early in this century Riegl wrote that "man, in a state of culture, finds a purely passive role toward the world of objects by which he is completely conditioned impossible, and he sets out to regulate his relation to it, to make that relation

one of independence and autonomy; he does this... by means of art (in the widest sense of the word)..." Riegl, like Semper and others, imagined this to be achieved by the construction in art of alternative worlds and orders. With Schnaase, Podro identifies this desire for freedom as a motive behind the search of modern art for a programme of autonomous development of visual forms relatively liberated from historical conditions.

When an emphasis on art as a vehicle for some sort of free activity is connected with an account of the beholder's activities which incorporates reference to theories of perception, the contributions of this nineteenth-century tradition to practical art criticism become clearer. Podro shows how our habits of formal analysis of compositions have developed from these sources, whatever our ignorance of their background. Two important dualities which still bedevil our thought about all the arts were confronted throughout the tradition. The first is that which contrasts the material and the image it bears; the second opposes the combination of material and image in the work of art to the activities of the mind in interpreting it. The interpretive inventions of the critical historian seem consistently to have borne upon these topics. For Hegel the relationship to the viewer was already explicitly part of the content of visual art, and Podro shows how Riegl developed this idea in his writing on the "exterior unity" of Dutch portraiture. Semper showed how technique can become part of

design, how the materials or construction may themselves be themes of the "self-illuminating" work of art. Later, drawing on the perceptual aesthetic of Hildebrand, Wölfflin proposed the equivalence or interplay of material and subject matter in our perception as a potential mediator of these dualities.

Retrieval, transformation, and freedom are a few of several themes discussed by Michael Podro. Viewed reflexively by its own criteria, *Critical Historians* offers us a valuable set of historical "retrievals": the retrieval of little known names and themes for the history of art history, of German texts which have not yet been translated into English, and - closer to the author's own meaning of the term - the attempted "retrieval" of a tradition of thought which has in a way been lost to us while still exerting an influence. Whether or not there is currently a "crisis" in art history, it is important to examine critically the backgrounds of views, attitudes, and practices which have such effects. This is a sophisticated book, not part of the still unwritten history of art history which the field needs at an introductory level, but something necessary to it. Although what may be said of past art history is not necessarily what may be said of past art, the author has, by his own terms, "absorbed" the thought he treats of so far into his own that the book gives evidence against the very scepticism it addresses - scepticism about the possibility of historical retrieval that is not merely external or "archaeological".

## HISTORIOGRAPHY Ancient, Medieval and Modern by ERNST BREISACH

This pioneering work arises out of Ernst Breisach's realization that history, the discipline identified with reflection on the past, has no comprehensive account of its own historical career. In the late twentieth century, when there is much talk about a crisis of historiography, this state of affairs is more than just an annoyance: it sometimes leads historians themselves to make *ad hoc* judgements on the nature and theory of history that fail to take into account the problems of historiography historically.

In this work, Breisach presents an effective, well-organized, and concise account of the development of historiography in Western culture. Neither a handbook nor an encyclopedia, *Historiography* narrates and interprets the main lines of development of the discipline, from its origins in Greek poetry to the present. For it is only in the context of the whole of Western historiography's development, the author contends, that we can truly fathom the role and nature of history as a human endeavour.

From this survey, the development of historiography emerges as a story whose plot was devised by the course of Western culture itself and whose concern to reconcile the past with the present and the future demonstrates a perennial link between history and human life. Breisach's monumental work thus not only serves, to display the richness of the discipline and to provide an understanding of the historiographical view of past generations, but also gives proof that history is an enduring endeavour inextricably bound to the structure of Western life.

488 pages, August 1983, £28.00 cloth; £10.80 paperback

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE 1920-1970 by GERMAINE BRÉE

In her survey of French literature from 1920-1970, Germaine Brée demonstrates that to understand the literature of that period we must consider it in its social and historical context. After an overview of the historical, political, and social climate in post-World War I France, Brée examines the literary life. She focuses on the intellectual currents that affected literature - those in painting, cinema, popular culture, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy - and ends with the development of the novel, poetry, and theatre. Brée anchors her analysis on eight authors whose work she feels is emblematic of the time: Cocteau, Breton, Malraux, Céline, de Beauvoir, Camus, Duras, and Simon. *Twentieth-Century French Literature* includes a Dictionary of Authors that provides bibliographic as well as biographical information, and a revised bibliography. Translated by Louise Guiney.

390 pages, August 1983, £20.00

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD

## Hush

Shh. Sizzle of days, weeks, months, years...  
How much of us has gone, rising and crying.  
My skin seeps its pond of dew.

Air slips and licks as I walk out today  
In the transparent mouth of the weather  
When the first leaves are greening.

Behind me I can hear  
A click of fantasy heels,  
But there is no one there.

She is with me, as I call to see  
A tick friend whose skin is drying  
On the bones of her split.

I stand on the red threshold with my flowers.  
How old this is, and how the heart beats faster  
As I wait at the bell like a mourning wooer.

As the dog barks, as I give my flowers  
And a secret wind blows in from eternal woods  
As my flowers sigh, asking for water.

Douglas Dunn

a better position to do this than the less fortunately placed, who are distracted by economic and social problems. He would like disadvantaged parents to be given more help and encouragement to control and supervise their children rather than have them taken away. He thinks schools should pay more attention to the less academic types who cause most of the trouble and that they should be made to undertake training in citizenship, parashoot and life skills and concerns beyond the hours of classroom attendance. He believes in neighbourhood self-help and the control of vandalism and the like at grass roots rather than by the interventions of distant bureaucrats. He thinks youngsters should be made to accept responsibility for their actions by adjusting official punishments in proportion to the gravity of the offence. To dress up the punishment of removal from home under the guise of welfare by calling it a "care order" is hypocritical and confusing.

The much derided medical model, according to which a significant proportion of delinquents are emotionally disturbed and in need of psychological understanding and help, receives little consideration. Hoghugh acknowledges that pure justice must be tempered by some allowance for the special weaknesses and problems of delinquent children, but it is only when he writes about the work of institutions - of which he has great experience - that he gives really serious and sympathetic attention to treatment. Otherwise, his chapter on treatment is curiously ambivalent. He recognizes the desirability of constructive, humane approaches, but points out how costly and ineffective many schemes have proved. He pleads for greater realism and attention to the needs of delinquents rather than to the convenience and security of the adults in charge, but he has not much faith that chronic misbehaviour will be alleviated by improved psychological well-being. He even suggests that "perhaps we should seriously consider the value of treatment in terms of producing well-adjusted, if not positively happy delinquents!" Here he and I must part company.

## A flair for faces

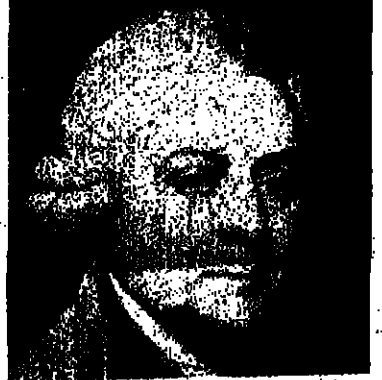
Peter Greenham

DORINDA EVANS  
Mather Brown: Early American Artist in England  
297pp with 160 black-and-white photographs and 9 colour plates.  
Harper and Row. £16.50.  
08195 5969 8

Mather Brown was born in New England in 1761 when the colonies were freeing themselves. His father was a clockmaker who, on the death of his wife, entrusted Mather at the age of two to her half-sisters. Both Copley Fielding and Gilbert Stuart were friends of the family and their example, inflaming his own longing for adventure, carried him to the West Indies to paint miniatures, then at the age of twenty, across the Atlantic, first to France and at last, with a letter of recommendation from Benjamin Franklin for the President of the Royal Academy, to England, where he came under suspicion of being a rebel and republican; but not for long.

In less than ten years, he was portrait painter to the Duke of York, Benjamin West, who let students of the Academy come to his rooms for advice, foretold that Brown "would soon make a figure in his profession". He was handsome and lively, so his sitters wanted to please him; and he wanted to please them. But for him it was not enough to do a portrait. He hoped to take his place with historical and religious painters such as West and Copley Fielding. Americans who had also come to England, Mary Queen of Scots, Henry VIII, and Henry VII, being christened the Battle of Trafalgar, the death of Nelson, the son of Tipuoo taking leave of the Zagan, Louis XVI taking leave of his family, Lord William Russell taking leave of his life, were the topics which excited his ambition.

age. He went from town to town, from Bristol to Liverpool, from Liverpool to Manchester, taking some huge canvases such as Louis XVI's farewell with him for exhibition. In 1815 he wrote to his aunt in America and told them he would destroy his pictures if he could no longer pay for their storage. The autists, whom he had told of his successes, heard less and less from him, and nothing during the last years, which he spent in a boarding-house in London, secretive, disconsolate, a mystery to the landlady who wept over him at his end.



A detail from Mather Brown's painting of John Adams, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

Dorinda Evans has told us everything there is to say about Mather Brown's family, his travels, his ups and downs, his pictures (and she often shows photographs of those which are lost). Such care is common today among scholars. What is uncommon and what makes her book so impressive is her sentiment: she likes Mather Brown and wants others to like him. She is so loyal to "handsome young Brown", as he was known in London, that she puts him among painters such as West and Copley Fielding and Gilbert Stuart. My own copy of her admirable book has the habit of falling open at West's "Death of General Wolfe", as if to remind us that there is a gravity, an ease even in

disaster, a grace of grouping, and a pattern of light and shadow which Brown was never able to achieve in his crowded histories.

The truth is that Brown, though he learnt so much from West, never learnt how to compose well. Miss Evans says of the "Finding of Moses" that Brown knew, or thought he did, what it was to be a deserted infant. An artist needs more than a heart in the right place; the less Brown has to do in the way of bringing order into a picture, the better he is. A single figure is better than two or three; a head and hands is better still; and best of all is a head and nothing more. In a head or face his own candour and good nature triumph.

If, as at least one critic believes, there was a rule of thumb, based in the Golden Section, which European painters applied, Brown never knew it. The sumptuous tumble of robe and curtain in which Reynolds enhances the suavity and stance of his nobles has the grace and order of a Gothic arch. Brown's royal dukes look as if they were striding a pose in front of an unmade bed, but the particularity which made it hard for Brown to design a picture, even with only one figure, helps him give his sitters the look which they and no other individual could have had. Though well-wishers often tell a portrait-painter that a likeness is not important, and who will be able to tell, anyway, in a hundred years' time, it is still true that certain artists of whom the greatest is Holbein, convince you that their portraits are like (not for the reason once given by C. S. Lewis, that there can be no other explanation of such ugly faces), and that the likeness is not to be separated from the quality of the picture but is part of it. Some of Brown's portrait drawings, which he used for the paintings, are brisk, hardy and humane; they are not only, as Miss Evans says, his masterpieces, but also the expressions of a character, frank and independent. If he had a theme, it lay not in those voluptuous and declamatory farewells, but in the plain face.



## commentary

### Tokens of love and loyalty

Marc Jordan

Artists of the Tudor Court, the portrait miniature rediscovered 1520-1620

Victoria and Albert Museum

ROY STRONG

The English Renaissance Miniature 208pp, with 255 illustrations, 8 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £18. 0 500 23370 5

Roy Strong has applied some tonic rigour to a subject which has done more than its share of gossip masquerading as history. The exhibition *Artists of the Tudor Court* and his companion book *The English Renaissance Miniature* set out to break down the rigid compartments of our thinking about painting in sixteenth-century England. The happy result is not only an enhanced feel for the "portrait in little" as an intimate and precious object but a new appreciation of the artistic range of a succession of painters we have learned to see exclusively as miniaturists. With so little hard documentary material a fair amount of imagination and faith are needed to follow some of Strong's conclusions and attributions. But there is no doubt that Tudor art comes into a new sharp focus at the Victoria and Albert. We are being offered a decisively new understanding of the achievements of Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver as well as an introduction to their unassuming but seminal predecessors Lucas Hornebolte and Levin Teelinc.

The first step is to push the miniature firmly back into the closet where it belongs. The tiny size and rapid water-colour technique of the limning made it uniquely capable of capturing the pulse of life. It recorded what Hilliard called "those lovely graces, witty smiles, and those stolen glances which suddenly like lightning pass", a feat beyond any oil painting in England at the time. This immediacy made it a very intimate art form. Elizabeth I kept her collection "in private manner" in her bedroom. The gift of a miniature was a mark of great favour, the gauge

of a special *entente*. This made it ideal not just as a lover's token but much more usefully as a gift to be given by monarch to subject. The Tudors were very adept at exploiting the royal image as an instrument of statecraft. And they quickly grasped the potential of the miniature as a kind of political bribe. Indeed the first miniatures to be produced in England were commissioned by Henry VIII and they were exclusively of the royal family and its immediate circle. The model was the work of Jean Clouet, Francois I's court painter. But the cynical Henry was as likely to have been taken by the



Elizabeth I, (c 1590) an unfinished miniature by Isaac Oliver.

political and diplomatic potential of limning as its aesthetic appeal.

The French connection was intermittently potent for the rest of the sixteenth century. Hilliard spent two years in mid-career in the service of the Duc d'Anjou on a rather unsuccessful quest for "money and knowledge". And Isaac Oliver was born and possibly trained in France; his style certainly suggests contact with the court art of the Valois. But as Roy Strong points out in *The English Renaissance Miniature* another, more revealing, line of enquiry lies not on the London/Fontainebleau axis but on the London/Ghent axis. For two of the earliest exponents of the miniature in England, Hornebolte (who taught the secrets of the art to Holbein) and Teelinc (who may have been

Hilliard's teacher) belonged to prominent dynasties of Burgundian illuminators. They both worked for the Tudor court not in the limited capacity of miniaturists but as illuminators of manuscripts and state documents and designers of engravings. Hornebolte also almost certainly painted panel portraits and produced ephemeral decorations for court pageants. Like Hilliard a generation later he was an artistic jack-of-all-trades running a large workshop on medieval lines.

Beside Holbein (who got a much smaller salary from the king) Hornebolte is small beer. But he has left us one striking and tender image in his miniature of the royal bastard Henry Fitzroy. The melancholy gaze of this sickly youth with his embroidered night-cap makes a poignant contrast to Holbein's more familiar Henrician thugs. This is an image that can hold its own beside Hilliard's Elizabethan melancholics. Yet Hornebolte was temperamentally incapable of poeticizing what he saw. The image has an impressive ring of truth to it.

Levin Teelinc was more consistently a second-rate performer. But hers is a curious case. She came from the same Burgundian background as Hornebolte and was imported to fill the gap after his death. But she doesn't seem to have belonged to an artisan milieu in England. Instead she operated as a gentlewoman first to Mary and then to the young Elizabeth. As a result her artistic output was small and to judge from the tiny group of miniatures and manuscripts which Strong has put together for the exhibition her touch was rusty and clumsy. But she seems to have been entrusted with important work including the design of Mary's Great Seal. And she did sometimes have a flair and inventiveness in design that she couldn't match in execution: she seems to have painted the first oval miniature and the first allegorical miniature, anticipating Hilliard by a decade.

It is a convincing part of Strong's argument that much of the mystery surrounding art in Elizabethan England evaporates if we realize that Hilliard inherited the non-specialist assumptions of the medieval artisan. He and his workshop willingly turned

an old-fashioned, linear, decorative, colourful style derived from the illuminator's art to everything from miniatures to full-size icons of the Queen, from goldsmith's work and title-pages for books to pageant decorations and tomb painting. But one artist emerges from the exhibition with his stature enormously increased for the opposite reason; because compared with Hilliard his preoccupations were relatively exclusive and definitively modern.

Isaac Oliver has always been historically elusive and many of his miniatures are frankly difficult or even



Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales (1612) by Isaac Oliver.

displeasing to look at. Yet here is the artist whom Strong sees "as by far the greatest painter to work in England between Holbein and Van Dyck". The juxtaposition with Holbein is an apt one, since unlike the other sixteenth-century miniaturists they both came to the art as fully-formed painters in large. And like Holbein, Oliver was trained in and committed to a Renaissance aesthetic that was quite alien to Hilliard. The traditions view of Oliver as Hilliard's "pupil" will have to be abandoned. No easel paintings by Oliver have been identified, but portraits are plentiful. For anything but portraits he was not a painter. There was a series of signed drawings of scriptural and mythological subjects. The most accomplished of these, an erotic

encounter between nymphs and satyrs in a wood, is also on show. Strong dates this polished Mannerist exercise to the early years of James I but there are similar drawings going back to the 1580s. It is extraordinary that they were produced in the quasi-medieval context of Elizabethan art.

Certainly Elizabeth herself would have nothing to do with Oliver's modern, naturalist aesthetic. After the all too revealing results of the old Queen's portrait sitting to Oliver she would only deal with the familiar Hilliard. His *retardataire* style suited her vanity and her statecraft a good deal better. And despite Oliver's newfound art-historical eminence most visitors to the exhibition are likely to endorse Elizabeth's preference. We still like Hilliard best when he is at his most Hilliardesque; that is when he is at his most decorative and his most romantic. Oliver's famous, but unacknowledged, "Unknown Man", who burns for love against a curtain of flames, a conscious exercise in Hilliard's manner, remains more beautiful and more moving than the affected Italianate intensity and minutely stippled *chiaroscuro* effects of the contemporary "Unknown Melancholy Young Man" from the Welbeck collection. Just as Hilliard inspired portraits in oils are curiosities which betray their origins in another medium on another scale may of Oliver's most progressive miniatures have the unpleasant photographic quality of telescoped oil paintings.

Oliver must sometimes have despaired of his position in an England isolated from the current of European art. But the future lay with his kind of painting and advanced taste did catch up with him before he died. If Oliver had at one time to paint like Hilliard to please his clients, Hilliard lived long enough to have to imitate Oliver. His attempts to be *à la mode* in the new atmosphere of the Stuart court were, as the show demonstrates, sad exercises in a style he didn't understand. Hilliard's art was a glorious sunset, the last brilliant light of a medieval tradition. And the miniature is at its best when it is most true to that tradition. Which is why the most ravishing image in sixteenth-century English painting is still his typical "Young Man Among Roses".

### Author, Author

**Competition 134**  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 26. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

1 Entries, marked "Author, Author 134" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on September 2.

1 Here and there among the foundations one might still find evidence of the majestic of former splendour: the great number of cast-iron bathtub, for instance, which had tumbled from the blazing floor to another until they hit the earth; twisted bed-frames also, some of them not altogether rusted away; and a simply prodigious number of basins and lavatory bowls. At intervals along the outer walls there is testimony to the stupendous heat of the first: one can dislodge small pools of crystals formed in layers like the drips of wax from a candle, which gathered there, of course, from the melting of the windows.

2 A cloud, hitherto unseen, came upon the moon, and hovered an instant like a dark hand before a face. The illusion went with it, and the lights in the windows were extinguished. I looked upon a desolate shell, squelched at last, unheeded, with no whisper of the past about its stinging walls.

The house was a sepulchre; our fear,

and suffering lay buried in the ruins.

3 The lawn, the grounds were trodden and waste; the portal yawned void. The front was as I had once seen it in a dream, but a shell-like wall, very high and very fragile-looking, perforated with paneless windows, no roof, no battlements, no chimneys - all had crashed in.

And there was a silence of death about it: the solitude of a lonesome wild.

**Competition No 130**  
Winner: Alistair Elliot  
Answers:

1 Oh! what a happy life were mine Under the hollow-hung ocean green! Soft are the moss-bed under the sea. We would live merrily, merrily, Lord Tennyson, "The Mermaid".

2 There was a Diving Company which undertook to bring up precious effects from shipwrecked vessels, and which announced that it had laid in a stock of wonderful machines resembling complete suits of armour. In front of the helmet was a huge glass eye like that of a cyclops, and out of the crest went a pipe through which air was to be admitted. The whole process was exhibited on the Thames.

Lord Macaulay, *History of England*, volume 3, chapter 19.

3 Seated upon the convex mound Of one vast kidney, Jonah prays And sings his carols and hymns, Making the hollow vault resound God's goodness and mysterious ways.

Till the great fish spouts music as he swims.

Aldous Huxley, "Jonah"

### Private altars

Barbara Wright

PAUL CHAND

The Lorenzaccio Affair  
Olivier Theatre

In *The Lorenzaccio Affair* Paul Chand has had the excellent and successful idea of trying to correct the eternal stereotype of George Sand - the betrousered, cigar-smoking, nymphomaniac Amazon. But to present a truly balanced, in-depth portrait of this very complex character in forty-five minutes is an impossible task; it couldn't be done even in a play as long as *Lorenzaccio*. Chand's title links his play - legitimately - with the National Theatre's current production of Musset's *Lorenzaccio*: "the literary child of the liaison between its author and George Sand". Its real subject, however, is not *Lorenzaccio* but the liaison, and the violently contradictory partisan views taken of it by their "friends" - and by posterity.

To recap briefly: Sand and Musset were introduced in the spring of 1833 by Buloz, the publisher of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, to which they both contributed. He was twenty-three, she twenty-eight. Musset already had a justified reputation as a "débâcheur" - one of his own most frequently used words. Sand expected to dislike him; instead, they attracted each other and soon became lovers. Hard-working, conscientious George saw it as her mission to save Alfred from himself and to encourage him to work; at first he was all for it - in theory. In December they left for Italy: Sand fell ill in Genoa, Alfred found this very boring and went drinking and whoring. In Venice it was Alfred's turn to fall ill, but not before he had had time to tell George that it was all a mistake, he had never loved her. Nevertheless she, with a twenty-six-year-old Italian doctor, Pagello, nursed him day and night for weeks and saved his life. Considering herself rejected sexually by Musset, she became Pagello's mistress. When well enough to travel, Alfred left for Paris (March 1834), leaving Sand in Venice with Pagello. Some of their most passionately loving letters were written during the ensuing months, and Musset never failed to send his "warmest regards to that excellent fellow, Pagello."

The *Lorenzaccio Affair* consists of short scenes of three different types: the first illustrates this story, with Christine McKenna as George Sand, Derek Hollis as Musset, and Joss Buckley as Pagello. As a kind of counterpoint we see the publisher Buloz (Robert Stephens) and Alfred's father (Alan Haywood), who, "some years afterwards argue about what may or may not have taken place". Thirdly, there are a kind of

dream sequences taken from the two writers' fictionalized reconstructions of their story, in which the idealized versions of themselves are played by Beverly Foster and Paul Bentall. The dominant impression left by the play, though, is of a bossy, nagging, well-meaning Sand perpetually quarrelling with an irresponsible "iluminé" who was tormented by jealousy. This was often enough the case, but it is only part of the truth.

What the play doesn't make clear is the very interesting chronology of the flood of documents written about this, after all, rather short-lived affair. Eighteen days after he arrived back in Paris, Musset wrote to Sand (April 30 1834): "J'ai bien envie d'écrire notre histoire; il me semble que cela me guérirait et m'élèverait le cœur. Je voudrais te bâtir un autel, fût-ce avec mes os; mais j'attendrai ta permission formelle." Formal permission was willingly granted, but Sand wrote: "Il m'est impossible de parler de toi dans un livre, dans la disposition d'esprit où je suis; pour toi, fais ce que tu voudras: romans, sonnets, poèmes; parle de moi comme tu l'entendras. Je me livre à toi les yeux bandés."

This "altar" built to Sand was *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, and it is a remarkable book. (Chand really should not have made Buloz twice refer to it as a play.) The romantic stuff comes only in the second half of the book; at first, the twenty-four-year-old Musset shows that he has thought deeply and originally about the times he lives in, blaming the famous debauchery of his generation on the disillusion engendered by the fall of Napoleon, and he even expresses strong feminist ideas.

Sand waited until two years after Musset's death (1857) to write her novel *Elle et Lui*, a fairly ludicrous concoction in which "Thérèse", a painter, is a saintly, self-sacrificing character, although "Laurent" (also a painter) doesn't come out of it too badly. Nevertheless, the book so incensed Alfred's brother Paul that he ripped out that same year (1859) with his own version: *Lui et Elle*, in which "Olympe", the George character (a composer, this time), is a lying, maleficent man-eating harpy. All later commentators agree that Paul de Musset was blinded by ignorant loyalty to his brother and equally ignorant hatred of George Sand. And what he didn't know was that the publication of Alfred's letters would more than vindicate Sand. She was tempted to publish them to defend herself against "les saletés de l'accusation" of her enemies, but Sainte-Beuve advised against, and they only appeared in 1904, the centenary year of her birth. Paul Chand's play is the apéritif that gives his audience the appetite to go further into this fascinating story; it is a pity that it only received two performances.

### The quest for perfection

Peter Kemp

Letters Home

Chanel 4

*Letters Home* by Rose Leiman Goldemberg tried to build up a portrait of Sylvia Plath by extracts from her correspondence with her mother. That the resulting picture was badly blurred was partly due to Goldemberg's habit of re-touching her material. Described as "compiled" from Sylvia Plath's letters, the play in fact copiously re-wrote them. Sentences were habitually re-cut, lines pulled out of context, letters confusingly mingled. The most crucial correspondence was most extensively muddled with over ten alterations occurring in the ten lines or so announcing Plath's separation from Ted Hughes.

This (unacknowledged) interference - generally prepossession the letters into something more staccato and simplistic - distorted the play's picture of its poet. And confusion was thickened by a not very illuminating choice of extracts. The main incidents in Plath's

life were charted; but the most psychologically revealing passages were ignored.

Leaving a particularly gaping hole in the play's canvas was its omission of Plath's poetry. Though many poems were packed into the letters to Aurelia Plath, none got delivered here. Likewise, the letters more literary sections tended to be scissored out. To indicate that her subject was an artist, Goldemberg relied, instead, upon a battery of emphatically arty ploys. Closed into a set enigmatically fastened with sheets of jagged perspex, Sylvia and Aurelia went through weirdly stylized routines. Sometimes, they chanted in unison; sometimes, simultaneously, they differed dialogue. Regularly, they piped in and out of one another's sentences. On one occasion, as if singing a round, they intoned identical lines, "Visually, too; things could be behind." Visually, too; things could be behind.

Perfectionism, the letters keep suggesting, was at once Sylvia Plath's fatal flaw and source of strength. "Perhaps the hardest thing I have to accept in life," she wrote, "is not being perfect." A desire to perfect, Ted Hughes disclosed, drove her to work tirelessly at unsatisfactory poems instead of discarding them. The poems themselves find perfection a matter of continual concern. One derives from the fiction between an injured woman and the plaster-cast she is encased in: she is raw and warm; the cast is perfect but cold. This ambivalent attitude towards the lifeless but immaculate recurs. "Edge", Plath's final poem, sees her suicide in terms of escape from life's mess through transformation into a statue-like corpse: "The woman is perfected" by becoming rigid as an effigy. Conversely, life's blemishes are vividly heightened by metaphor and minutely pored over. Scrutinizing imperfection is a compulsion. Mirrors glint menacingly throughout Plath's poetry and her novel, *The Bell Jar*. "Terrible rooms / In which a torture goes on one can only watch", they reflect her obsessive anxieties. Being seen to be gleefully superior to what she hankers after, "Brilliant" is a revealingly favoured word in her letters. But brilliance, besides dazzling, can signal a dangerous intensity. "A lamp turned too high might shatter its chimney", one of Sylvia Plath's friends wrote to her. The fear was well-founded. Plath's entanglements - often exploding into her letters as high-octane gush - ultimately burned her out. Before this, though, she fuelled an incandescent glare that *Letters Home* didn't have a glimmer of.

### Highland flings

Graham Swift

Another Time, Another Place  
Gate Cinema, Notting Hill

JESSIE KESSON

Another Time, Another Place  
95pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.95p (paperback, £2.95).  
0 7011 3921 8

Comparisons between books and films of books may be invidious. Clearly, the book has the advantage as the original article. But where the mainspring of both is a simple plot whose power would exist independently of book or film version, it is possible to contrast treatments fairly; and in many ways Michael Radford's film of *Another Time, Another Place* is more effective than Jessie Kesson's novel, which it none the less leans on faithfully.

Three Second World War Italian prisoners, Paolo, Umberto and Luigi are billeted on a couple in a remote Scottish farming community. The wife, discontented, married, is attracted to the handsome Paolo who remains distant and unavailable, while the Scots seem a stilted, inhibited affair. A folk song arouses an uneasy display of emotion; and the dancing is only genuinely enlivened when the wife flings herself into a reel with an abandon which clearly expresses her own frustrated sexuality. All this movement on simplifications which the book is careful to avoid (Kesson, for example, allows her Scots to derive more vigour and poetry from their folk song tradition), but it works very convincingly within the dramatic terms of the film. Phyllis Logan's fine, reticent performance as the wife is a perfect foil to Giovanni Mauriglio - her normally sombre and impassive face lighting up before Italian ebullience.

Where the novel's terseness undoubtedly succeeds, however, and the film's expansiveness corresponds, as well as to tell its tale, it attempts a picture of a tight-knit agricultural community, its work and traditions, its involvement with the land and the seasons. It does this on the whole graphically and admirably, but one sometimes feels that the picture might have been richer (some of the minor characters and relationships might have acquired more body) if it had not been squeezed into the novel-sized frame.

If the book opts for understatement and fleeting revelation, the film, though exercising its own general restraint, allows itself to linger and to relish, and to play up the more obvious dramatic contrasts inherent in the material; and this makes for both more lyricism and more sustained tension. Though some scenes are too slow (too much invested in a look, a pose, a composition), the narrative, aided by

the fine photography of the Scottish landscape and an unobtrusive score by John McLeod, is allowed to breathe and resonate as it does not in the novel.

The film's biggest specific difference from the book is in the treatment of the Italians. In the novel, though differentiated from each other, they remain somewhat shadowy, peripheral figures. In the film they are all fully rounded characters, and the superb performance of Giovanni Mauriglio as Luigi, who from unprepossessing beginnings casts a gradual spell over the audience paralleling the one he casts over the wife, occupies a pivotal place.

While, indeed, the novel concentrates on the Scottish community and its internal workings, the film emphasizes the cultural and psychological opposition between the prisoners and their minders, despite the risk this involves of invoking national stereotypes. The Italians sing, are amorous, kiss madonnas and talk of their Mamas; the Scots are chary, dogged and lock up their feelings. A marvellous scene in which the prisoners celebrate Christmas, throbs with a frankly sexual vibrancy. By comparison, a harvest dance held by the Scots seems a stilted, inhibited affair. A folk song arouses an uneasy display of emotion; and the dancing is only genuinely enlivened when the wife flings herself into a reel with an abandon which clearly expresses her own frustrated sexuality. All this movement on simplifications which the book is careful to avoid (Kesson, for example, allows her Scots to derive more vigour and poetry from their folk song tradition), but it works very convincingly within the dramatic terms of the film. Phyllis Logan's fine, reticent performance as the wife is a perfect foil to Giovanni Mauriglio - her normally sombre and impassive face lighting up before Italian ebullience.

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The Summer 1983 issue of *Cenestrus* (No 13), the Scottish arts magazine (available from 5 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW) contains a new media section, including essays on new Scottish cinema.

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Oxford University Press







## Estimating the future

Alec Nove

ABRAM BERGSON and HERBERT S. LEVINE (Editors)

The Soviet Economy: Toward the Year 2000

452pp. Allen and Unwin. £27.50. 0 04 335045 3

This valuable work is based upon conference papers, presented in October 1980 at a gathering of leading American specialists on the Soviet economy. Included in it is a fascinating summary of critical discussions of the various papers. Both editors and contributors showed themselves well aware of the many uncertainties which limit the possibilities of confident forecasting, the outcome of which may be significantly affected by different assumptions about military expenditures, oil output, the effects of technical progress, the effects of economic reform (if any), the reorganization of agriculture, of the growth or contraction of foreign trade, and so on. The value of a symposium such as this lies in the fact that distinguished specialists were able to discuss these and other variables, and that an effort was then made to incorporate the various alternative projections into an econometric model. This model, as its authors point out, helps us to "encompass in quantitative terms the indirect as well as the direct effects - the total system input - of the various assumptions under consideration. . . . They also rightly stress the limitations of this method, since "any projection reflects, to a great extent, the judgment and insight of the analysts".

The use of this model attracted criticism from Michael Manove and Judith Thornton, and there is a danger that the complexity of the mathematical procedures gives an "inappropriate scientific aura" to what are in fact intelligent guesses. Some of the relationships specified in the model are based on extrapolation, some incorporate expert views and assumptions, and some of the conclusions which emerge from the computer are, so to speak, corrected by hand when the results appear implausible. While one paper (that of Beriliner) does discuss various reform alternatives, their possible effects do not figure in the projections of the model. The authors of the econometric "overview" (Bond and Levine) correctly and honestly point out that they assume that "each of the factors that production is homogeneous in nature" (eg, that imitative machines are no more "productive" than Soviet machines), and that "obviously this is not a very good depiction of reality". Paradoxically, the effort to disaggregate makes the study less, not more, convincing. It may seem crude to project a rate of growth based on such aggregates as total inputs of labour and capital, but in fact it is a very useful procedure, even if the "residual" presents definitional problems.

It is quite another matter to make estimates for each of many industries and sectors, for then the specificities of each should be the subject of specialized research. In this volume the only industrial sector studied in detail is energy. (A good paper by Robert Campbell). The general conclusion is that growth will be modest because of the growth of the labour force and of factor productivity - seems sound enough. But some of the more detailed projections look decidedly odd. Thus why should agricultural output grow by as much as 4.53 per cent per annum in 1981-85 and then only by 1.89 per cent in 1991-95? It could just as well be vice versa. Why does the "baseline projection" envisage an increase in the growth-effectiveness of investment after 1980? The trend in past decades is in the contrary direction. Is the outcome derived from an assumed rate of growth of GNP, or is the latter derived from the former? Given the expectation that oil alone accounted for over half of hard-currency earnings in 1980, how can the Soviet Union expect to increase the value of its exports to the "developed West" from \$24.2 billion in 1980 to \$65.8 billion in

1990? This does not follow at all from the sober and sensible assessment of the foreign trade by Ed Hewitt. Is the projected decline in the rate of growth of "machine-building and metal-working" consistent with the assumed growth both of military hardware procurements and the re-equipment of civilian industry needed to sustain the projected industrial growth rate? Why should grain production rise by 4.09 per cent per annum in 1981-85, but only by 1.81 per cent in 1986-90? Again, why not vice versa? These may be the consequences of the interrelationships assumed in the model, but I find it hard to believe that these figures would survive a sectoral analysis. One is reminded of a saying cited in the March 1983 issue of the *American Economic Review*: "there are two things you are better off not watching in the making: sausages and econometric estimates". Finally, there is one statistical or printing error: in Table 1.8 the grain "balance" for the year 2000 is quite out of balance, since utilization exceeds supply from all sources by more than 40 million tons.

On the basic and vital question of the overall growth rate, the projection through to 2000 seems on the high side. Growth of GNP at 3.15% per annum through to the year 2000 seems the more improbable because linked to an increase of 5.16% per annum in capital stock, which is well above present trends. Evidence from Soviet sources shows a tendency towards stagnation, which alarms the leadership. Bergson's valuable paper analyses the many obstacles to the diffusion of technical progress, and these obstacles remain formidable. Capital output ratios are rising, labour productivity increases ever more slowly. True, the existence of waste and inefficiency on a large scale is itself evidence of the potential for improvement, and greater efficiency is being most earnestly sought. However, Andropov's drive against indiscipline and corruption will surely not be enough, unless there is a fundamental reform of the planning system. Joseph Beriliner's paper on reform is therefore of vital importance, and is of the high quality one expects from him. He envisages four possibilities: "conservative" (status quo with minor modifications), "reactionary" (neo-Stalinist, stronger centralization, discipline, narkutky), "radical" (the Hungarian "market" model) and, finally, what he calls "liberal" or "neo-NEP", which preserves centralized state planning but complements it with small-scale private enterprise. It is his view that if the malfunctioning of the economy reaches intolerable levels, the regime is more likely to opt for the "liberal" than the "radical" reform model, since it would perceive it as less threatening to the interests of the party-state machine. Such a conclusion could be questioned, but the argument is most cogently and elegantly presented.

Other very good papers include Murray Feshbach's discussion of population and labour force with excellent supporting evidence, and Gertrude Schroeder's survey of consumption - an admirable mixture of well-written verbal analysis and comparative statistics. (Just one phrase could be questioned: why, in a list of illegal activities which add to supply, does she include "consumer goods stolen from the state"? Presumably they were intended to be consumed, if not by the thieves!) Leslie Dienes tells us much about regional problems, and Martin Weitzman analyses industrial growth in aggregate with his usual skill. Gale Johnson's account of agricultural organization and management seeks to identify sources of inefficiency, and concludes that it is not "socialized agriculture" as such that is the main cause; "imposed plans, a short time horizon, unreliable supply of poor-quality inputs, inadequate infrastructure" are basic. Agricultural production prospects are discussed by Diamond, Bellis, and Kenison. Of particular value is their account of the fodder problem. Their alternative projections of domestic production, import requirements, and possible changes in feed conversion ratios are sound and realistic. One could wish for more attention to the vital problem of peasant incentives, their lack of commitment as well as inadequacies of mechanization, and a realistic annual

mobilization of workers, students, soldiers, to bring in the harvest. After much hesitation, the party leadership has now backed the creation of small autonomous work-teams within state and collective farms, which may be an effective remedy.

The one political scientist present, Seweryn Bialer, contributed a typically perceptive paper on "Politics and priorities". While fully recognizing the strains which low growth imposes upon the system, Bialer concludes that "the odds are overwhelming against" fundamental economic reform. This conclusion, however, rests on the assumption that the Soviet Union is "a basically stable state" and that there is no "systemic crisis". Then indeed fundamental reform would be unnecessary. The word "crisis" is capable of many interpretations. It would indeed be wrong to suggest that the Soviet Union is in any danger of collapse or disintegration, yet it is not inappropriate to speak of a crisis of system. The odds are against fundamental economic reform, but perhaps no longer "overwhelmingly" against.

Finally, it remains for me to repeat that this rich and controversial volume is worth the closest attention from anyone interested in the subject.

"Tractorstrol, USSR, 1930", reproduced from *For the World to See: The Life of Margaret Bourke-White by Jonathan Silverman* (224pp. Secker and Warburg. £25. 0 436 46470 5). Bourke-White wryly accepted the propaganda value to the Soviet authorities of her 5000-mile trip as the price to be paid for her 800 photographs of Russian life.

## Sauter pour mieux reculer

David C. Wilson

RODERICK MACFARQUHAR

The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: Volume 2, The Great Leap Forward 1958-1960

470pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50. 0 19 214962 2

"The great leap forward ended not with a bang but a whimper." So begins the conclusion to the second volume of Roderick MacFarquhar's planned trilogy dealing with the decade preceding the Cultural Revolution. What a bang it was while it lasted. The largest nation on earth was seized with a compulsive determination to turn a backward China into one of the front-runners of the industrialized world by sheer hard work and determination. In the newly established communes sensible shock battalions worked only one shift; the real enthusiasts sometimes worked for four or five days virtually without stopping. Throughout the country back-yard steel furnaces sprang up, new factories were built and both targets and reported achievements shot upwards at dizzying speed. Euphoria - and hyperbole - reached new heights. The Party official in charge of agriculture described his vision of the Communist utopia, now within grasp, as a land flowing with the Chinese equivalent of milk and honey. There would be abundant food for all, with delicacies and white fungus for those who wanted them. All would have electricity, running water and television. After work people would wear silk and satin, and the communes would breed so many foxes that all would have overcoats lined with fox fur.

The dream turned out to be a nightmare. In 1960 the population of China declined by some 4.5 per cent. MacFarquhar estimates that some 16 to 29 million people died during the great leap because of the leap. The figures both for claimed achievements at the time, and for losses admitted later, are numbing in their magnitude. Not only were the Chinese "carried away by the self-deceptive euphoria of their 'heady months' when foreign commentators too wrote as though the millennium had arrived" (A footnote says kindly: "They shall be nameless"). It is hardly surprising that the great leap is now seen as one of the traumatic periods of modern Chinese history. The wonder is that Party unity only cracked slightly and did not split asunder as it did in the next great trauma of the Cultural Revolution.

For such a dramatic development, the great leap comes across as strangely haphazard and unplanned. The ideas of using China's one great asset, mobilized manpower, to push forward economic development, and of avoiding the mistakes the Russians had made in their agricultural policies, were sound enough. But the euphoria, the unreal targets, the collective me-hall with family cooking-pots being broken up to make pig-iron in backyard furnaces; even the communes themselves; all seems to have grown with the haphazard rush of an avalanche. Mao blamed a journalist for prompting the rush to communism by publishing his one-word comment on an embryo commune: "good". MacFarquhar, with more justice, shows that much of the blame for what happened must rest on Mao himself, with his visionary thinking, his belief in continuous revolution and, perhaps above all, his domination over colleagues who were disposed to be more cautious. One, the Minister of Defence, Peng Teh-huai, challenged Mao at the crucial 1959 Lushan Conference. He was quickly overwhelmed. Mao reacted sharply to this challenge to his authority, with what MacFarquhar sees as the first use since the Communist victory of arbitrary personal power: an unhappy precedent for the Cultural Revolution.

It was not just in China itself that the great leap broke the mould of political life. Sino-Soviet relations never recovered. The breach which opened in 1960 has never healed. The Russians began to see the Chinese as reckless, not only in their abandonment of orthodox economic policies, but in a high-risk policy of confronting American power in the Taiwan Straits and fighting the Indians on the disputed McMahon line. The Soviet Union had other priorities. Khrushchev saw his attempts at improving relations with the United States, and the hopes engendered by the 1959 Camp David meetings, as more important than backing Chinese policies, which he clearly found incomprehensible and dangerous.

Furthermore, just as Mao reacted against the challenge inherent in Peng's criticism of the great leap, so the Russians were outraged the following year when the Chinese challenged their right to be the sole world Communist movement. As a mark of displeasure, and to bring the Chinese to heel, some 1,300 Soviet advisers were suddenly withdrawn from China. The Chinese were not brought to heel. The political map of the world has been different ever since.

All these developments provide part of the backdrop to the Cultural Revolution, which MacFarquhar is painting with skill, careful research, and cool analysis. He is helped in this particular volume by a mass of new material made available in the past few years by a Chinese leadership whose policies are the deliberate antithesis of those of the great leap forward. With this, and the information which the Red Guards used to attack their leaders during the Cultural Revolution, it is now possible to study the period more thoroughly than ever before, both for the broad issues and for such fascinating details as Deng Hsiao-ping mistaking most of the crucial Lushan Conference because he brot his leg playing ping-pong. MacFarquhar, with his long experience of studying Chinese affairs, makes excellent use of all these sources to provide a judicious and detailed account of three traumatic years.

The aims, claims and disasters were all on a gigantic scale. So was the growing clash between the two great powers of the Communist world. Behind his leg playing ping-pong, MacFarquhar, with his long experience of studying Chinese affairs, makes excellent use of all these sources to provide a judicious and detailed account of three traumatic years.

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## Radicalism between the lines

Blair Worden

JAMES R. JACOB

Henry Stubbe: Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment  
220pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50. 0 521 24876 0

Henry Stubbe (1632-76) has a place in the history of politics, of medicine, and of religion. His political propaganda helped the Puritan radicals in 1659 and the Stuart monarchy in 1672-73. As a doctor, he took an enterprising interest in the new science and engaged in stormy controversy with the early Royal Society. In *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism*, a breezy work which remained unpublished until 1911, he cut through the inhibitions of theological debate to produce a critique of Christian doctrine, and a challenge to providentialist explanation, which have earned him comparisons with Gibbon. Stubbe was an exceptionally clever man, with a forbidding range of learning, an incisive turn of phrase and a hunger for attention. Yet his contemporary impact was limited. To read the vivid and well-informed sketch of him by Anthony Wood, who called the young Stubbe "the most noted person of his age that these late times have produced", is to wonder how, even in a short life, so much promise came to so little.

James R. Jacob thinks this an unreal difficulty. Stubbe's achievements, he maintains, have been seriously underestimated. The divisions of academic labour, which have distributed Stubbe's pre-Restoration writings to historians of political thought and his publications after 1660 to historians of science, have obscured a continuous thread of consistency in his career. When that thread has been glimpsed, we can learn to appreciate Stubbe as "one of the most interesting and original thinkers of his age", who "helps to revise our understanding of the origins of the Enlightenment".

We are told by the opening words that "this book is a piece of detective work". The detection is needed to uncover Stubbe's intellectual consistency. That consistency is certainly likely to elude a casual reader of Stubbe's work and of the sparse materials for his life. On an unsuspecting perusal, indeed, the only visible consistency might seem to lie in Stubbe's willingness to serve his

various patrons. He had a living to earn, and more than one career to pursue. In the 1650s, an ambitious but impecunious young Oxford don, he enjoyed the favour of three important men: Sir Henry Vane, Thomas Hobbes, and Cromwell's Vice-Chancellor John Owen. In 1659 he devoted his nimble pen to Vane's radical cause, a commitment which impelled him to bite the feeding hand of Owen, just as he was to bite the hand of James Harrington a few months later.

After the Restoration Stubbe's Vanist past was a heavy liability, sure to be exploited by his opponents in controversy. Yet he worked his way back, found new patrons at Court, and in 1672 was hired by the government to write in favour of the Dutch war and the Declaration of Indulgence. Next year, however, English politics were transformed by the match between James, Duke of York, and Mary of Modena, and by the consequent prospect of a Catholic dynasty. It is a fair guess that Stubbe had been introduced to the Court by "Whigs" who now withdrew from it, for in October 1673 he was briefly imprisoned after writing against the royal marriage. In the remaining three years of his life he did not break the political surface again.

Jacob proposes a markedly different account of Stubbe's career. The authentic Stubbe, he believes, is the political radical of 1659, the scourge of kings, nobles, clergymen and universities. After the Restoration his radicalism, although possibly modified, remained intact. To perceive it, we must engage in detective work. We have to remember the censorship which prevailed in the "hostile and repressive environment" of the Restoration, when radicals were driven "underground". Stubbe, "no longer free to espouse his radical political and religious views", resorted to "rhetorical duplicity". His works, "marked by subterfuge and replete with double meanings", must be "read between the lines": "a careful reader or decoding strips away the masks and lays bare the double meaning." Once we know how to read Stubbe "correctly", we often find that what he says is different from, even the opposite of, what he means. The problematical tensions of Stubbe's life disappear. He was radical in politics, science, in religion. Radical political

change would introduce "a radical civil religion", which "was meant to tear down a clerically dominated society and clerically dominated learning to replace them with something more secular and pagan."

I fear that Jacob has become mesmerized by a thesis which has no evidence to support it, which is countered by such evidence as there is, and which proves to rest on a hapless series of textual and contextual misunderstandings. His reading of Stubbe's tracts is largely concentrated on a handful of brief passages, taken out of context and out of sequence. The consequences of this approach become sadly evident even before we reach the Restoration and confront the question of double meanings. Jacob's first close textual engagement is with Stubbe's *Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause* (1659), his discussion of which is a catalogue of worrying misinterpretations. In the passage to which Jacob gives most attention, Stubbe presents a straightforward argument to show that Old Testament injunctions against idolatry and blasphemy cannot be legitimately used to sanction religious intolerance in seventeenth-century England. Jacob has contrived to read the passage as a statement that the Hebrew policy had produced the first universal, natural religion that might serve as the remote and primitive archetype for a civic, natural religion in England.

Later we meet the claim, based on "closer reading" of Stubbe's pamphlets against the Royal Society in 1669-71, that he inserted "subversive meanings" into them. Stubbe, we learn, surreptitiously alluded to doctrines which were "officially proscribed". "What Stubbe in fact does is to rehearse sixteenth-century resistance theory deriving from Calvin and elaborated by his, chiefly Huguenot, interpreters." Why this political heresy should have been discernible by radicals, yet have escaped detection by the repressive censors of a Court which was to employ him soon afterwards, is not explained. The truth is that the heresy is not there. Stubbe drew a clear distinction, to which Jacob is oblivious but which was commonplace, in discussion of political obligation, between active resistance and "obedience merely passive". The former he disavowed; the latter, which as worded by Stubbe was respectable, he upheld.

It is true that Stubbe's pamphlets in the late 1660s and early 1670s do not always say what high-flying divines would have liked them to say. His political outlook is fundamentally peculiar, and his Restoration tracts, most notably his *Further Justification of the Dutch War* in 1673, are often ironic at the Church's expense. In the period surrounding the Declaration of Indulgence, however, that irony would have had a broad and reputable political appeal. Ironic and ambivalent writing in Restoration political literature is a pregnant subject in both literary and political history, worth exploring from an angle less oblique than Jacob's. It would be a mistake to reduce the issue to one of censorship, an obstacle which seems to have worried most seventeenth-century writers less than it exercises some of their twentieth-century historians.

Stubbe's works are richer, and the influences upon them broader, than one could infer from Jacob's selective treatment of them. Stubbe's own political position, in so far as it can be disentangled from his opportunism, suggests an interesting if ill-balanced assortment of ideas and enthusiasms: anticlericalism; a fascination with "reason of state" and with the relationship between religion and national unity; an admiration for the frugal virtues which had flourished in ancient republics; a conception of politics as the art of the possible. These preoccupations, we can readily agree, did not always fit easily into the political crises to which Stubbe's pamphlets summoned them. He was not the only seventeenth-century intellectual to confront a "crisis" between his own beliefs and those of

Jacob's suggestion that the same pamphlets indicate "Stubbe's acceptance of parliamentary sovereignty" and his claim that Stubbe "saw parliament" as "the defender of popular liberties against the Society", betray a similar unfamiliarity with the language of seventeenth-century political discussion, and appear to derive from an unfounded assumption that in 1669-71 readers would have spotted sedition in any statement about monarchy which did not advertise unquestioning enthusiasm for an unlimited and divinely appointed prerogative. Ill at ease among seventeenth-century politics, Jacob has trouble with their chronology. The Commonwealth's engagement of loyalty was not introduced in 1651; it is misleading to say that Stubbe's republican tracts were published in "late 1659"; the composition of a pamphlet written by Stubbe in 1669 is allocated to 1670 on one page and to 1671 on the next. Stubbe's works are neither listed nor indexed, an omission which compounds the difficulties created by Jacob's over-abbreviated references.

Jacob recognizes that hard evidence of Stubbe's movements and allegiances after 1660 is hard to come by. So it would seem worth listening to two clear indications which do survive from the 1660s. One, which Jacob does not mention, belongs to 1665, when Stubbe, in a gesture hardly suggestive of subterranean radical credentials, publicly thanks Sir Charles Lyttelton for fixing me in the family of "the royalist courtier Viscount Mordaunt". The other, which Jacob does mention but does not explain, is the apology prefixed by Stubbe to *The Indian Nectar*, his pamphlet of 1662 on the medical value of chocolate. Having acquired a Court post, he renounces his radical past and declares that "I have no longer a regard or concern for Sir Henry Vane, or Gen. Ludlow, than is consistent with my sworn allegiance" to the restored monarchy. The dedicatory epistle of that pamphlet is dated April 1662, the month when Vane, on whose fate Puritan eyes were anxiously turned, was moved to the Tower in preparation for his trial and execution. (Jacob rightly remarks that Vane "was executed after 1660".) It is simply inconceivable that a republican reader of Stubbe's statement would have interpreted it as a testament to enduring but strategically concealed radicalism, or would have turned to Stubbe's subsequent writings for heartening signs of interlinear sedition.

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his employers, although others met the challenge with more dignity. Unmistakably the contemporary of Marvell, Marchmont Nedham and John Hall of Durham, Stubbe was a child of political chaos. He had to make his way in a world whose violent changes were not of his making.

And who knew, after 1660, that the tide would not turn again? Jacob, searching for evidence that contemporaries were alive to Stubbe's double meanings, lights upon some remarks by Stubbe's Royal Society opponent Joseph Glanvill. Glanvill's accusations, plainly intended to embarrass Stubbe by their public reference to his youthful indiscretions, are not worth much, but in any case Glanvill's point, in the passage where he is reported to have detected "subversive undertones" in a statement which seemed "innocent enough on its surface", is not that Stubbe has furtively egged on the radicals; it is that he has couched royalist sentiments in language which would enable him to explain them away "should his old patrons return to their insolent reign".

It would be a pity if Jacob's thesis were to discredit his subject. He gives welcome publicity to Stubbe's treatise on Mahometanism, even if his account of it does scant justice to Stubbe's zestful intelligence. It is possible that a historian willing to explore the intellectual background to early deism, and not content to observe resemblances between Stubbe's work and the writings of Blount and Toland, would establish for the treatise the importance in the history of ideas which Jacob claims for it. And Jacob is surely right to dwell on Stubbe's departure from providentialist history, although it then becomes impossible to reconcile Jacob's claim that the 1659 Stubbe is the true Stubbe with the stark providentialism of his 1659 pamphlet *Malice Rebuked*. The claim is also hard to reconcile with a private letter to Hobbes in 1656 in which he explained the function of the universities he was publicly to attack three years later.

We are offered bold but strangely imprecise assertions about the significance of Stubbe's scientific arguments, which are held to have been more "enlightened" than some scholars have allowed. Jacob appears to see in them (unless I have read too much between the lines) a regrettably extinguished alternative to the classroom Enlightenment, and to a "liberal" set of scientific beliefs, which were imposed by the Royal Society and by "Latitudinarian" theologians in order to dish the radicals. So grand a theme merits a more rigorous and better documented argument.

The English Chartered trading companies and the sea by G. V. Scammell (48pp. The Trustees of the National Maritime Museum. £2.50. 0 90555 70 8) is a concise illustrated history in twelve sections, among which are "Companies: Origins, Names and Functions", "Commodities and Cargoes" and "Whaling".

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# Per Abbat and his epic

Brian Tate

COLIN SMITH

*The Making of the 'Poema de mio Cid'*  
263pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£25.  
0 521 24992 9

The *Poema de mio Cid* is about battling heroes, *The Making of the 'Poema de mio Cid'* is about battling critics. The field of conflict in the epic poem itself is the frontiers of Christian and Moorish principalities in the eleventh century; the modern struggle is waged between those who differ quite radically about how we should read the poem today, and its frontiers are even more complicated. Colin Smith holds firm to one particular approach which, evolving over a decade or more of learned articles, culminated initially in an edition of the *Poema* (Clarendon Press, 1972) which has earned high praise. Now, ten years later, comes a statement of belief set out at length and delivered with characteristic incisiveness.

Those even marginally acquainted with theories of the origins and composition of medieval epic will recognize immediately the critical territory and nomenclature: traditionalists, neo-traditionalists, oralists, positivists. The list of paladins runs from Milid Fontanals to Menéndez Pidal and Spitzer, with the post-war companies of Russell, Armistead, Chasica, Duggan, Horrent, Deymond, Michael and many others. What has improved over these intervening years is our cultural knowledge of the period in question, as well as our access to contemporary documents of a wide variety. What have changed much less are the arguments about legend/poem, single/multiple authorship, learned-popular influences, oral improvisation, historicism and the literary theories which lie behind such concepts, all ultimately affiliated, one could argue, to the age-old duel between Romanticism and Realism.

Professor Smith's perception of the unity and internal coherence of the text as its highest aesthetic value, rather than the historical accuracy of the events of the narrative, has led him to follow the path of author-centred criticism; this explains the sequential pattern of the chapters. In what he claims to be "a somewhat bold book", he stresses the simplicity of his approach, based on the text and on comparisons with other texts, and on what we know about the literary culture of the times. Theories of epic improvisation are for him irrelevant, theories about formulae do not prove anything about oral improvisation; they complicate simplicities: "they are, in the last analysis, superfluous". What he does advance from the poem is the creative power of a single author who, at a specific time, drew on resources available to him and re-created them imaginatively. In other and well-known words, this author is not to be found at the end of a long chain of hypothetical poetic versions, but stands at the beginning of an inventive and experimental adventure, the adaptation in the local vernacular of his experience of the French *chanson de geste*, with all the oddities and defects of an innovative text. Smith thus displaces the existence of an antique tradition of *epic* and, in turn, rejects imputations to the poet of nationalistic sentiment. The poet of the *Poema* is named as Per Abbat, mentioned in the closing lines of the surviving manuscript as having written (*escrito*) it in 1207.

The literary history of the Romance epic, rendered in the crudest of terms, begins with the poet of the Oxford Roland c. 1100 AD, and the genre is transplanted a century later into Spanish soil, a cultural time-lag which need in no way be considered discreditable. It is not surprising, therefore, that Smith views the twelfth century in Castile and León as something of a "cultural desert" with only a sporadic intellectual life represented by a few Latin texts in prose and verse and some shards of lyric. As for narrative verse he argues that the presence of "legend" in Latin

chronicles of the period in no way warrants the assumption of the existence of vernacular poems, even that of the supposed *Infantes de Lara*. Here he has certainly hardened his stance and expects the full fury of the American traditionalists and oralists to fall on his chilly British pragmatism. For him, their hypothesis of successive redactions, while perfectly admissible in theory, is not necessary prior to the turn of the century, and subsequent variations detectable in chronicles of the thirteenth century can be plausibly linked with the rapid diffusion of the author's text.

There are many more aspects of the "formation" of the poem to which Smith makes valuable contributions: the metrical structure, the stress pattern, *laisse* and assonance, and the whole matter of sources, particularly learned sources, where he has led the field in opening up a fascinating range of comparisons far beyond the simplistic juxtaposition with the *Chanson de Roland*, which we were accustomed to some twenty years ago. I do not have the space here to enter into discussion over these issues, and prefer to settle upon a point central to the title he has chosen. A great deal of what he affirms is linked, directly or indirectly, with suppositions about the author and the author's intentions, sharing the common supposition that statements we make about what a text means are about what an author consciously or unconsciously intended.

## Middle-class moderns

A. F. Lambert

PETER A. BLY

*Galdós's Novel of the Historical Imagination*  
196pp. Francis Cairns, The University, P.O. Box 147, Liverpool, L69 3BX. £12.50.  
0 905205 14 6

There is now a great deal more criticism of Galdós in English than there are English translations of his work. Many of the novels of Spain's greatest novelist since Cervantes remain untranslated; most of those which have been translated are unavailable. The peripheral status traditionally accorded here to Hispanic matters and the cowardice of the publishing industry are of course primarily responsible for this state of affairs. But also to be blamed are the priorities of the academic profession, according to which the most trivial work of interpretation counts for more in the struggle for promotion and tenure than the most testing translation of a really worthwhile, perhaps, but irredeemably evidence of mediocrity. The translator can expect a patronizing commendation at best, or at worst to become victim of the "I could have done much better if I'd bothered" game.

Peter Bly's book is not at all trivial. Galdós's greatest novels (those of the 1880s, the main object of Dr Bly's study) explore and meditate upon the interrelationship between public and private life, and Bly focusses thorough and expert attention upon this relationship in its historical dimension. Faced by the problem of what to call these books, for they are not exactly historical novels, though Galdós wrote over forty of them, Bly opts for the rather cumbersome term "novel of the historical imagination" — one used of George Eliot's work by Thomas Deegan. Is it a term that remains rather vague; one wonders if all novels are not in the broad sense exercises of the historical imagination. Furthermore, given that Galdós's interest in history formed part of an intensely moralistic concern with the problem of how to achieve national regeneration without impugning the values of piety, and how to "conserve" a modern "civilized" morality that should do justice to individual citizens, it is not clear why these could not as well be called novels of the political imagination. They might even be called novels of the sociological imagination, for no the least of the pleasures afforded to

Given the assumption of an author fully conscious of his literary intentions, Smith proceeds to extrapolate him from the poem, for there is in truth no other source he can properly lay hands on. The documentary evidence that joins a historical Per Abbat with the individual mentioned at the end of the text is still only a hypothesis, as is his status, but it is a hypothesis necessary to a particular reading strategy.

The conjunction of civic and familiar virtues with legal topics in the working out of the narrative line has suggested to many critics an author who is a professional lawyer. It is only a step from the lawyer to the "legal mind" and to assumptions about what the legal mind is capable of as a poet. "Lawyers have to be hard-headed... when a lawyer writes an epic, part of the setting will consist of credible geography." The final link is between "the highly lauded *verismo*" of the poem to the "author's temperament... legal training." So that the conception of life, the ethos of the poem is "idealistic rather than prosaic as befits a lawyer with poetic inclinations." The characterization of the hero with his appropriate *gravitas* is a "likely creation of an author whose profession was the law". The poet will therefore be less of an entertainer than a forward-looking supporter of a programme of juridical reform in which the professional technicians (sic) "count as important verista elements".

anyone reading Galdós's substantial opus in chronological order is to watch his evolution from self-appointed spokesman for Spain's frail middle class to its educator and critic. The man who in 1868 believed that his country's future health depended on the existence of a vigorous middle class capable of controlling the parasitic extravagance of the aristocracy at the top and the irrational excesses of the urban mob at the bottom, in 1917 welcomed the Russian revolution.

It is churlish, however, to criticize the imprecise theoretical framework of this study, since Bly has only risked such criticism by his rejection of the tired old "history in the works of" formula and the kind of catalogue scholarship that goes with it. Certainly, his formula is adequate to permit a skilful study of the novels of the 1880s.

## A Galician Goncourt

G. M. Scanlon

MAURICE HEMINGWAY

*Emilia Pardo Bazán: The Making of a Novelist*  
190pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£19.50.  
0 521 24466 8

The Spanish nineteenth-century novel has not travelled well. Even the outstanding novelist of the period, Galdós, is little known outside Spain. Other writers of merit have fared less well. This book is to be welcomed, therefore, for bringing one of Spain's major novelists to the attention of a wider public.

Emilia Pardo Bazán was a woman of boundless energy and considerable talents. A militant feminist, journalist, literary critic, short-story writer and novelist, she had a taste for polemic which kept her at the forefront of intellectual life in nineteenth-century Spain. She first gained notoriety for a series of articles published in the early 1880s in which she expressed her qualified approval of Naturalism, a movement dismissed by many of her contemporaries as sordid and immoral. Even Galdós was somewhat bewildered to learn that he had a woman disciple in Spain who was a staunch Catholic. Maurice Hemingway believes that Zola's influence on Pardo Bazán's own fiction has been overemphasized at the expense of that of the Goncourt brothers. More importantly, he argues that the critics' concentration on her

Such a stance takes Smith to the point of creating a poetics for the author by which he can isolate those passages which fail to match up to this hypothetical standard. Thus, in the early parts of his composition, the poet is deemed to be working too hastily and "the enthusiastic adaptation of a literary source... caused him to overlook the needs of total realistic credibility".

One is inevitably reminded of the literary climate of the late nineteenth century, when Gaston Paris and his contemporaries were working out a means of reading the prose romances of the thirteenth century. Naturalism had established its rule over much that was alive in contemporary fiction, and the leaders of medieval studies were conditioned by what they thought great literature stood for. In the words of Eugene Vinaver: "they thought it stood for truth, for the portrayal of accurately observed reality, for consistent psychological motivation, and the subordination of action to character, in other words, for all the things to which they had become accustomed in the novels of their own time... they did not know their own time... they were 'fashions'; to them they were a matter of axiomatic belief."

It is difficult to avoid the belief that Smith subscribes, consciously or unconsciously, to the intentionalist camp. There may be strong reasons for his choice. But if this is so space should be

The central chapters of this monograph convincingly demonstrate how subtly Galdós exploited his readers' knowledge of recent history to enrich his stories of individuals' lives and, conversely, how these could and sometimes should be seen to operate at the level of historical allegory. Bly is at his best when teasing out the implications of glancing historical allusions, to show how they make a pattern which reflects or reinforces that of the fictional biographies.

Bly has successfully overcome the first difficulty of converting a PhD thesis into a book: his book is very readable. There are, indeed, occasions when the attempt to enliven produces a distinctly strained effect, with such chapter headings as "In History's Antechamber" and "Hesitant Emergence of a Redemptive Ahistoricism".

## Naturalistic novels of the early 1880s

has been largely responsible for the common view of her as a significant but dated writer.

His own study aims to rectify that judgment by focusing on the novels of the late 1880s and early 1890s which, in his opinion, show her work at its best. For him, *Los pazos de Ulloa* (1886), a Naturalistic study of the decline of the aristocracy in rural Galicia and widely regarded as her finest work, merely marks the point at which she began to see the main function of the novelist as the dramatization of human psychology rather than the representation of the external world. Following the latest developments in both literature and science, she now found inspiration in the Russian novelists whose work had recently become available in French translation. In the French novelist Paul Bourget and in new theories in experimental psychology.

To reverse the somewhat condescending critical orthodoxy that Pardo Bazán's distinction as a novelist lies principally in her descriptive powers rather than in her handling of psychology and characterization is no mean task. Hemingway's careful and often illuminating analyses persuasively demonstrate that, on occasion, she was indeed capable of deftly exploring the complexity of human motivation and of achieving an open-endedness which is generally more to the taste of the modern reader than the self-confident certainties of the Naturalist novel. This, therefore, is a positive contribution to our understanding of her work for, even if

found for justifying the strategy, more particularly because intentionalist convictions, directed at one "correct" interpretation, have been drawn remorselessly into the centre of contemporary debate about textual interpretation. It is a well-known argument, consequent on recent shifts of critical attention, that the author's role may be no more than a textual function created by the reader, which should not necessarily be privileged. We may not need to kill off the author, but we should at least ask ourselves, with Foucault, if the critic's view of the author is "only a projection... of the operation we force texts to undergo, the connections we make, the truths we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognise or the exclusions that we practise". Or if Foucault is too tendentious a figure, one might recall the words of Thomas à Kempis in another context: "Do not be influenced by the importance of the writer, and whether his learning be great or small; but let the love of pure truth draw you to read. Do not enquire: 'Who said this?' but pay attention to what is said."

The debate over the relation of author and text need not necessarily be confined to the modern age. It may well be that the reading of epic texts in a new way might help to clear the present impasse between those who stand behind the notion of a single author and those who stand behind the notion of a multiplicity of authors.

But his work still bears traces of the remorselessly one-tracked thinking characteristic of the doctoral thesis. One would have liked to be reminded from time to time that Galdós was a very funny as well as a very serious writer, that he was fascinated by the working of families, not just by isolated individuals on the one hand and society at large on the other. Above all, he was one of the great innovators of psychological realism; there is a good deal in common between his account of personality and those of Freud, as there was a great deal in common between Madrid and Vienna. Even in his portrayal of Isidora Rufe in *La Desheredada*, a character full of historical symbolism, Galdós sacrifices not one nuance or idiosyncrasy of personality on the altar of allegorical significance.

Pub, poets, deadlines took their toll, and in 1958 George Fraser went off to the quieter waters of the English Department at Leicester, eventually becoming Reader in Poetry. He died in 1980, shortly after his

G. S. FRASER

*A Stranger and A Friend: The Autobiography of an Intellectual*  
196pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £8.95.  
085635 460 0

George Fraser was a regular and much valued reviewer for this paper in the old anonymous days. Anonymity is thought to remove the temptation to show off: the reviewer displaying his cleverness at the expense of the author. In the same years, though, George Fraser was also writing for the *New Statesman*, where reviews were signed; but no more there than in the *TLS* did he show off. For the *New Statesman* he mostly reviewed poetry; he gave each volume his full attention, he wanted to do justice to the poet, to pick out the points of growth, to celebrate achievement never to cut down with a clever word. He wanted poems to be good, and if he found nothing to commend in a volume, he would pass it by. He wrote with zest, he kept to his lengths, he met his deadlines — even typing away for the *TLS* in the Mansfield Hospital when recovering from a breakdown.

This reliable reviewing provided the financial base for his career in the 1950s, along with work for the British Council, BBC, lecturing, translation, and all the marginal activities that help the man of letters pay his bills. Perhaps the activity that counted most for himself were the regular gatherings in his Chelsea flat, when poets read and discussed their work. George was not cliqué — his 1956 anthology *Poetry Now* has work by seventy-four poets — and the evenings in Beaufort Street were not to promote group cohesiveness, but by comment from fellow-poets, to help writers produce better work.

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## High thoughts and low

Dannie Abse

Gwen Watkins

*Portrait of a Friend*  
220pp. Llandysul: Gomer Press.  
£7.50.  
0 85089 847 6

During the war, when both Vernon Watkins and Dylan Thomas happened to be visiting London, indeed sharing the same taxi, an air-raid warning sounded. Soon after, a flying-bomb could be heard overhead — and worse, suddenly its engine cut out. After the touch of the explosion, some little distance away, the taxi moved on and Dylan Thomas gasped, "I thought we were going to be killed. All I could think of was the disgrace of my body being found with a copy of *Revelry* open at the pin-up page." Vernon Watkins, that most serious of men who has been described by Caitlin Thomas as one "bristling with metaphorical integrity" did not laugh, instead he replied ponderously "I would have been all right because I carry a Kierkegaard in my pocket."

What becomes clear from *Portrait of a Friend*, Gwen Watkins's portrayal of an intriguing literary friendship between these two Swansea-born poets, was how much Vernon Watkins was loved by his more famous wife. His obsession was rooted in the admiration of Thomas's poetry and in the love for the man himself. For his part Thomas became increasingly careless of his friend's susceptibilities, but he was forgiven. Perhaps the most touching declaration, that "I never loved more than to love the one I loved most, who became unhappy," is a way, says Watkins, to identify himself too much with Thomas.

retirement, having written a last handful of good poems.

His autobiography says nothing of all these matters. For it was written in 1949; it appears now interspersed with poems that illustrate the story. There's some cause for regret that he didn't go on with it, but not much: the early years of a life, when the character is being shaped, are nearly always more interesting and revealing to read about than the years of achievement. So I don't think this book suffers from curtailment any more than the autobiography of his fellow-Aberdonian, the artist James McBey, that finally appeared in 1977: both stop at the point where the young Scot has come to London and begun to make good.

George Fraser was born in Glasgow in 1915, with his father away at the war. Brought up in a household of women he became, on his own showing, a bit of a muf, whose chief pleasure was to sit at home and mutter stories to himself and whose chief weapon in the school playground was his power with words: "Be off with you, sir" — a phrase remembered from a fairy story — was his way of standing up to a five-year-old bully. He was eight when his father was appointed Town Clerk Depute of Aberdeen, the city which was to engage George's loyalty, perhaps most strongly after he had left it. Glasgow, he considered in retrospect, was "a strange, dark, shapeless dream: a great, and sprawl of bewildered human lives". Aberdeen, with its brisk, bold air and clearly defined boundaries, provided him with "more outward strictness and more inner security". Even today, the city's strong sense of identity and well-defined shape has allowed it to absorb North Sea oil without losing its character.

The Frasers' Aberdeen home was on the fringe of the city, with a large, neglected garden where George could moon about and read Dickens in old editions from the public library; the school was the Grammar, which Byron had briefly attended, where "though hard-working and doleful, I was always

eventually that it was simply a case of Dr Jekyll forgiving Mr Hyde.

After Thomas died *Time* magazine crudely described the poet as "a blob, a liar, a moocher, a thief, a two-faced booze-fighter, a puffy Priapus who regularly assaulted the wives of his best friends, an icy little hedonist who idly indulged himself in it up while his children went hungry..." Watkins would not accept that this caricature. He averred that in this caricature was a grain of truth, his friend was "Full of wonder, self-critical, compassionate, generous...". Gwen Watkins writes without exaggeration that "to the end of his own life, the thought of Dylan was never out of Vernon's mind or heart".

Mrs Watkins is reticent, perhaps too reticent, about her own relationship with Dylan Thomas. She is most riveting when she speaks not from hearsay but from personal experience. (Watkins's friendship with Dylan was almost a decade old before he met his wife-to-be.) One must recall the extent of Thomas's reputation when she touchingly writes, "My student friends from Oxford asked me unbelievably if I was really going to marry a man who was known as Dylan Thomas, and I was proud to answer that Dylan Thomas was, in fact, to be the best man at my wedding." Since he did not turn up, and his subsequent excuses seemed to be obvious lies — it is small wonder that a coyness separated the new Mrs Watkins from Thomas at their first meeting.

Dylan arrived in the Café Royal hot and very evidently wishing he hadn't arranged the meeting at all. To do him justice, he did his best to be pleasant, but he was not used to concealing his emotions. He told funny stories, he showed off, he blustered about his wife and children, he stopped passing friends and had confidential chats with

making blunders, caused by an imperfect sense of the conventions of the little community to which I now belonged". He was harmless and dreamy; he irritated his family by his vagueness; he was awkward with girls who, in the flat shapes and cloche hats of the 1920s, didn't measure up to the standard set by the Victorian picture-books he enjoyed. Even when fashions changed, things went no better.

And in December on the ballroom floor The girls in flowering dresses swayed and I stood and hesitated by the door... Nor was he much more confident when he went to the university, at St Andrews; trying to be one of the boys, he joined the OTC, only to hear himself described, quite kindly, as "this poor colourless bastard". When he became a cub reporter on the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* he had to accost strangers in the course of duty; but even that training "did not cure me of shyness".

This sounds like a hard-luck story of the sensitive bookish boy who didn't fit in. But the lack of confidence in his social self was balanced by the confidence and determination of his literary self. "I felt the world was there to be copied with, and language was my means of coping." So he worked away at being a writer. He read strenuously, he wrote drowsful of poems, he began to have acceptances from the London magazines — while all the time, in talk at home, he would pass his poetry off as an eccentric hobby.

It was to London George Fraser came back at the end of the war, for his father had died, and the rest of the family had moved south; and there, in his demob suit of pinstripe grey, he felt like Balzac's young man, wanting "to be loved and famous". In no time Tambimuttu, who had published Fraser's first book of poems while he was abroad, had him back in the literary spotlight. William Empson shared his literary wit; Kathleen Raine was a Chelsea neighbour and friend. It

them, he dropped names, drinks and cigarettes. After an hour of this I could no longer hide from myself that what I felt at my first meeting with the poet of *Holy Spring* and *Poem in October* was inescapable boredom. I was bored with his behaviour and with what he was saying: I wanted out.

Gwen Watkins's relationship with Thomas hardly prospered in the years to come. Thomas himself felt affectionate towards Watkins — "one of Nature's wheelers" his wife calls him — but as Dylan became older he grew less and less patient with his high-minded and very literary friend, even became bored with his company. It was not in Dylan's deteriorating character to repay the debts or to carry out the duties owed to a friend. Moreover, whatever occasional lip-service he paid to Watkins's poems these were not in any way central to his life as his own were to Vernon. Why should they have been?

Mrs Watkins, though, in her interesting, if limited, study, is intent on demonstrating the affinity between the two poets. Can one see them as two sides of the same coin? Both were born and brought up in Swansea, both were romantic, "reluctant" poets dedicated to their craft, both were ineffectual about worldly matters, and both died in the United States. Indeed, according to Gwen Watkins, both their deaths were self-willed. Vernon Watkins had had a serious coronary yet continued to play squash, to slumber the steep cliffs of Penard on the Gower Coast, and he finally suffered a mortal heart attack while playing tennis at the University of Washington in Seattle. "Who can say whether it was Dylan's death that made Vernon hurry on to death himself?" asks the widow sadly. It is sad too, and seems unjust, that Dr Jekyll of Swansea was not as good a poet as Mr Hyde.

and had confidential chats with

OTC camp. His verse letter to Anne Ridler, whom he had never met, is assured: poet speaking to poet of their common concern, confident of being understood.

After joining the Army in December 1939, he began to move out into the great world, and meet other poets. During basic training at Perth he met William Soutar and Tom Scott; when he went out to Cairo — first as a clerk in GHQ and then on *Parade*, the Middle East Army magazine — the city was awash with writers. Lawrence Durrell, Olivia Manning, Reggie Smith, John Weller, Hamish Henderson, Iain Fletcher, Erik de Mauny, are some he recalls. He pounded his typewriter for the war effort, he kept his hand in as a poet by translating Cavalcanti. In the years at Cairo and Asmara — where he spent some time editing the *Eritrea Daily News* — he began to shed some of his shyness and self-consciousness and to notice other people more. Some Cairo characters are sharply hit off: Durrell

a small, burly man, with a round comedian's face, and a light voice that fluted away in unexpected malicious phrases; monopolising every conversation, without appearing to do so, he could make an evening magically entertaining.

The extraordinary John Galsworthy — Jacobite, Sinn Féiner, Indian Nationalist, according to the mood of the moment — appears as a very untidy RAF sergeant, his tunic stained and short of buttons, and wearing in his lapel the badge of the Chevalier of the Court of the Bey of Tunis.

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## Cold certitudes

Donald Davie

DICK DAVIS  
*Wisdom and Wilderness:  
 The Achievement of W. W. Winters*  
 244pp. Athens: University of  
 Georgia Press.  
 0 8203 0631 2

A poem is what stands  
 When imperceptive hands,  
 Feeling, have gone astray.  
 It is what one should say.  
 Few minds will come to this.  
 The poet's only bias  
 Is in cold certitudes:  
 Laurel, archaic, rude.

The tone of voice and the sentiment  
 (the one a mirror of the other) are  
 unmistakable: only one modern poet in  
 English ever spoke like this. The voice,  
 this unique, is irreplaceable; once  
 heard, it can never be forgotten. And  
 the poet who thus spoke can never be  
 dislodged from the canon, even though  
 he spoke with this authority in only a  
 few poems - far fewer than his  
 champions want to pretend.

This would not be the case if the  
 voice were merely idiosyncratic,  
 unmistakable only in that sense. Might  
 it not be claimed, for instance, that the  
 voice of Robinson Jeffers is similarly  
 distinctive, therefore just as ir-  
 replaceable? No. For the voice that  
 speaks these verses, though not to be  
 confounded with any other voice that  
 has spoken in our time or for several  
 centuries before us, nevertheless is not  
 unprecedented: it is the voice of  
 Arthur W. Winters, but equally it is

the voice, or one of the voices, of  
 Thomas Wyatt and Ben Jonson,  
 George Gascoigne and Walter Raleigh.  
 It is therefore a voice from the past,  
 and yet not the voice of pastiche; a  
 voice that sounded once and then  
 seemed stilled through 300 years,  
 which now, for those few who can hear,  
 sounds once again. Such moments,  
 when the seemingly long dead rise  
 from their graves and walk again  
 are the most magical and the most  
 affecting in literary history and, for  
 some of us, in literary experience. It is  
 nothing less than rebirth, as when Ovid  
 and Lucretius walk again in the pages  
 of John Dryden.

Gascoigne, Ben Jonson, Oreville, Raleigh,  
 Donne,  
 Poets who wrote great poems, one by one  
 And spaced by many years, each line an act  
 Through which few labor, which no men  
 retract.

There could hardly be a starker  
 contrast to that American tradition in  
 poetry - the central tradition, so many  
 Americans would claim - that runs  
 from Whitman's *Song of Myself*,  
 through Pound's unfinished and  
 unfinished *Cantos*, to Robert  
 Lowell's *Notebook*. The self-renewing  
 garrulity of such works will be  
 applauded by those for whom poetic  
 sensibility is a regularly spouting  
 fountain, and they will jeer at Winters  
 as coxswain. But Pasternak, in this if in  
 nothing else on Winters's side,  
 declared rather vehemently that poetic  
 capacity, thought of as a fountain, on  
 the contrary is a sponge.

All the same, the four lines just  
 quoted serve to show how few of  
 Winters's poems meet his own exacting  
 standards. "Act/retract" - the rhyme is  
 satisfyingly crisp and exact, but not if  
 we pause to reflect that no one can  
 retract a statement except the person  
 who made it. Winters's apologists and  
 champions, Dick Davis among them,  
 argue for the propriety in the twentieth  
 century of using a form so time-  
 honoured as the heroic couplet; but  
 they do not pause to consider whether

Winters's use of that form is  
 resourceful and adroit. Accordingly,  
 and lamentably, Winters and his  
 champions share with their antagonists  
 an astonishing flippancy towards the  
 greatest master of couplet rhyme in  
 English, Alexander Pope. By the same  
 token we look in vain in Winters for  
 any exercise in the Elizabethan plain  
 style so sustained as Raleigh's "The  
 Lie". Instead we get, directed against  
 the "socially conscious" verse of the  
 1930s, four stanzas on the pattern of:

Change or repose is wrought  
 By steady arm and thought:  
 The fine indignant sprawl  
 Confuses all.

This is truly fine and memorable, and  
 as apposite in the 1980s as the 1930s.  
 But let no one pretend that it  
 competes, in inventive handling of a  
 tight and intricate stanza, with the best  
 of Raleigh or Wyatt, nor with  
 to recognize another of Winters's  
 acknowledged masters) the best of  
 Thomas Hardy. Even in his early  
 Imagist phase - for Winters had in-  
 vented heavily in modernism, before he  
 turned against it - his performances are  
 often portentous and foolish when  
 compared with the best of what  
 was done in that mode by his con-  
 temporaries. At every stage he  
 chose among available models, and  
 masters with an earnestness, an  
 intelligent scruple, that is exemplary;  
 but when it came to practising verse  
 by (among others) David Levin, Thom  
 Gunn, Albert Guedar, Turner  
 Cassity, and Gabriel Pearson (in *The  
 Review*), Winters the poet, I'm afraid  
 we must say, deserved something  
 better. But then, as he saw himself,  
 "Few minds will come to this."

Surprisingly - dismayingly indeed,  
 for those who know Dick Davis as an  
 ambitious poet along Wintersian lines,

everything still remains to be said". So  
 he sets himself to the task of saying more,  
 much more than has been said before;  
 he succeeds, magnificently; succeeds  
 in surpassing the inoffensive even more  
 tantalizingly illuminated.

Ponge's activity (he has always been  
 averse to being "misplaced" in poetry)  
 is therefore not merely astounding in its  
 evocation of reality; it also has  
 profound philosophical implications.  
 Reading him, we become more con-  
 scious of the nature of language and  
 reality, and of the disparity between  
 the two. Meditating on his brilliant  
 comparison of a rose-bush with a  
 fighting cock, we begin to see that it  
 is the differences between the two which  
 count: it is the mind's effort to identify  
 the two, and its failure to do so beyond  
 a certain point, which produces the  
 vividness of the effect. His language  
 points outside itself, to a world more  
 real than before.

The present book contains a mere  
 sixty-four brief passages, dating almost  
 entirely from April 1950, and including  
 several descriptive passages (including  
 the highly successful "Les Poiriers"),  
 several important theoretical state-  
 ments. Ponge is abidingly interested in  
 "reading" his own work, because  
 things for his own sake, because  
 though our grasp of his own ideas  
 and of external objects is only partial,  
 at least we can be sure of the latter's  
 permanence: we can progressively  
 extend our grasp of them. He restates  
 the moral quality of his search: the  
 author needs "scruples, humility and  
 tenacity" in face of the object. His idea  
 of the artist, he claims, is a new one:  
 "The artist is a 'seeker'; his activity is a  
 form of research"; above all, he is not  
 interested in his finds as such; he  
 continues to search. For Ponge, as for  
 the modern scientist, his concept of  
 his texts as "documents", as records of  
 stages in the search for truth.

I cannot close, however, without  
 insisting on the presence of a human  
 Ponge of wit and humanity. His images  
 are full of human feeling; they  
 communicate the genuine shock of  
 adding to our awareness, not human  
 characters in the style of La Bruyère  
 but a set of much more intriguing and  
 mysterious personalities: the in-  
 scrutable objects, animals and plants  
 which share our world with us.

Francis Ponge

Nique de l'avant-printemps

70pp. Paris: Gallimard. 55fr.

2 07 023942 X

Yves Bonnefoy has written of  
 the amazing concrete particularity of  
 English: the capacity of our poetry to  
 "photograph" the object, and implied  
 the incapacity of French to achieve the  
 same effect. Francis Ponge, however,  
 has spent his life disproving Bonnefoy's  
 claim. His texts, single-mindedly de-  
 voted to such things as rain, fire, an  
 oyster, a pebble, mistletoe, a cigarette,  
 etc., seem to pull these intractable  
 objects out of the page to speak to us.

Yet many years ago, in *Problems*,  
 Ponge (with more than a touch of his  
 habitual modesty) described his  
 literary progress in these terms:

1. I recognized the impossibility of  
 expressing myself; 2. I fell back on  
 the attempt to describe things (but at  
 once wanted to transcend them!);  
 3. I recognized (recently) the  
 impossibility not only of expressing  
 but also of describing things.

He resolved therefore "to publish  
 descriptions or accounts of failures to  
 describe". At first sight such modesty  
 seems puzzling. His reactions to things  
 have always been remarkable: he has  
 always found it possible "in the case of  
 the simplest things, to make an infinity  
 of statements, consisting entirely of  
 remarks never before made". And do  
 not texts such as his oyster, for instance,  
 could hardly be more concrete?

But this is precisely the problem with  
 which Ponge is so passionately  
 concerned. Words are not realities, are  
 indeed totally unlike realities; and in a  
 sense, the greater the writer's success,  
 the more obvious the disparity  
 between word and things. Hence  
 many of Ponge's later texts contain not  
 only a "finished" set of phrases which  
 set the subject of his interest in a new  
 light, touching it with humour and  
 "bringing it alive"; they also relate his  
 struggle to describe the object, they  
 record different stages of the writing,  
 including his own sense of in-  
 sufficiency, they continually rub the  
 reader's nose in the impossibility of the  
 whole task. In respect of the most  
 everyday objects, as he says, "not only  
 everything has not been said, but also

also as a trenchant though good-  
 humoured reviewer - *Wisdom and  
 Wilderness* nowhere concerns itself  
 with the minutiae on which everything  
 else depends, with how, for instance,  
 Winters manages line-endings, across  
 or not across rhyme. Instead the  
 discussion proceeds at a level  
 comfortably far above such formal  
 particulars, in a realm where Winters  
 is aligned with Aristotle (justly) and  
 Wordsworth (unjustly). Even T. S.  
 Eliot, to whom Winters was opposed  
 far more virulently than he was to  
 Pound (and Davis is good on the  
 compelling reasons why), figures in  
 this book in terms of his professed  
 opinions, not as one who structured  
 and fastened together lines of verse in a  
 particular way. Accordingly Davis is  
 far more at ease with Winters the critic  
 and literary theorist than with Winters  
 the poet, though even as theorist and  
 polemicist Winters is never brought  
 into conjunction with those of his peers  
 who conceived for him through several  
 years a real though guarded and  
 apprehensive respect - notably, Allen  
 Tate and John Crowe Ransom. Davis,  
 I suspect, wrote this book several years  
 ago, and after the typescript had been  
 out of his hands for several years in  
 Athens, Georgia, chose not to update  
 it. Certainly there are recent and not so  
 recent testimonies which he neither  
 cites nor apparently has taken note of  
 by (among others) David Levin, Thom  
 Gunn, Albert Guedar, Turner  
 Cassity, and Gabriel Pearson (in *The  
 Review*). Winters the poet, I'm afraid  
 we must say, deserved something  
 better. But then, as he saw himself,  
 "Few minds will come to this."

The Victorians were endowed with  
 widespread sources of imagery, in  
 which the Christian *peregrinatio*  
 (filtered through the Romantic  
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philosophy are central to the tale". The  
 topics in question are the sympathetic  
 interest in the self and the methods  
 of Lockeian epistemology. Taken  
 together they provide stories with a  
 main character who frees himself from  
 false mental associations; this process  
 is labelled a "chain of becoming".

Having devoted the first third of the  
 book to an elaboration of these terms,  
 Keener then applies them to certain  
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Keener is so weighed down by his  
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 of aesthetic assumptions, one which  
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## Life as fashioned

A. O. J. Cockshut

AVROM FLEISHMAN

*Figures of Autobiography: The  
 Language of Self-Writing in  
 Victorian and Modern England*  
 486pp. University of California  
 Press. £25  
 0 520 04666 8

Though some autobiographers are  
 liars, and many more misinterpret  
 themselves, it is in the nature of  
 autobiography to claim to tell the  
 truth. The testing of this claim,  
 whether by internal evidence or by  
 external facts, determined for a long  
 time most critical approaches. Avrom  
 Fleishman's book is a distinguished,  
 though by no means faultless, member  
 of a new class of autobiographical  
 criticism; the stress here is on the  
 aesthetic quality, and autobiography is  
 assimilated to imaginative literature,  
 rather than to history. For the  
 historical approach the distinction  
 between an autobiography and a  
 novel, which, like *David Copperfield*,  
 incorporates personal memories, is  
 absolute; for the aesthetic it is tenuous.  
 We need not be surprised that this  
 book awards about the same space to  
 each kind.

For Fleishman self-writing (a term  
 which includes both kinds) since the  
 time of Wordsworth is characterized by  
 the new richness of symbolic reference:

The Victorians were endowed with  
 widespread sources of imagery, in  
 which the Christian *peregrinatio*  
 (filtered through the Romantic  
 poets) was only one strand. In the  
 exfoliation of these patterns in

Western art and literature,  
 traditional typology is not left  
 behind, but a new symbolic axis is  
 generated: the enrichment of a biblical  
 heritage with the whole history of its  
 aesthetic versions, where what  
 counts is not the specific content of  
 the original figure but its malleability  
 for life fashioning. The type  
 becomes a palimpsest.

This passage, as well as giving the key  
 to the book's argument, may serve as  
 an example of Fleishman's style. It  
 cannot be called verbose, because it is  
 packed with meaning; but one does  
 come to long for an occasional short  
 sentence in Saxon words.

For Fleishman, then, an auto-  
 biography is more an invention  
 than a quest; and the author is not so  
 much asking "How did I come to be  
 what I am?" as "How do I choose to  
 present myself?" The stress is on the  
 writing of autobiography (or novel),  
 rather than on what is prior to writing,  
 the struggle to understand oneself and  
 one's history.

There are two obvious dangers in  
 such a critical method. Fleishman has  
 been aware of both, though this has not  
 enabled him always to avoid them. The  
 first is that typology may encroach  
 beyond its proper limits. In considering  
 St Augustine, for instance, we may  
 rightly note the parallels with Virgil.  
 As in the *Aeneid*, Carthage is  
 associated with sensuality, and the  
 final goal is Rome. But the decisive  
 scenes in the *Confessions* occur in  
 Milan, to which there is no Virgilian  
 parallel. Why? Well, just because in  
 life they did. And, steeped in Genesis  
 as he was, we might have expected  
 Augustine to recount the stealing of  
 apples. But as he actually stole pears,  
 he describes stealing pears.

He begins by mistaking Newman's  
 metaphysical sense of the self as  
 undeniable reality with egotism. How  
 odd that it did not occur to Fleishman  
 that many people who have never

seen Gosse's "Immediacy" here as  
 dramatic; others might see it as  
 deceitful, in biographical terms.

Siebschuh's book is clearly and  
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 by far on Boswell, even if the *Life of  
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 comparing Gibbon with Tacitus at one  
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 information common to both; had he  
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 can itself be nothing if not literary,  
 Siebschuh might have directed the  
 argument of his book on to sounder  
 lines.

Moreover, while it is true that  
 Guiller, Candide and Rastelle are  
 fictional characters and their own  
 development (or lack of it) is  
 development, that should not displace  
 the attention given in the tales to the  
 worlds they inhabit, nor, most  
 important of all, the authors' feelings  
 about that world - Swift's sombre  
 satire, Voltaire's mordant wit,  
 Johnson's anxious judgment. These  
 aspects scarcely feature in Keener's  
 account. The discussions of the *Learnes*  
*Parables* and the *Augustine* novels,  
 principally *Northanger* and *Persuasion*,  
 suffer less from this than the  
 narrower range of approach and these  
 chapters are interesting, though  
 whether these works can be termed  
 philosophical tales is another matter.

John Hope Mason

Frederick M. Keener

*The Chain of Becoming: The  
 Philosophical Tale, The Novel,  
 and a Neglected Realism of the  
 Enlightenment*

306pp. New York: Columbia  
 University Press. \$39 (paperback,  
 \$19).  
 0 231 04001 6

The novel had a bad name in the  
 eighteenth century; now it is other  
 names which are treated with reserve  
 or condescension. Among them is the  
 philosophical tale; which this book sets  
 out to rescue from neglect. According  
 to Frederick M. Keener, the philo-  
 sophical tale aims at a specific  
 kind of realism, "the realism of  
 philosophical assessment"; and it has  
 a distinctive theme, the need for  
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 philosophical not because it may be  
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rather than the novel reflects those  
 assumptions. A hero freeing himself  
 from illusion to find some acceptable  
 form of truth is one of the oldest  
 themes of narrative literature, and its  
 treatment in these works has little to do  
 with Lockeian epistemology. For that  
 have been more emphasis on the origin  
 and genesis of the illusion, not  
 merely a criticism of certain mental  
 attitudes for being false.

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The other danger is more serious; we  
 may lose in the contemplation of  
 literary delights that sense of the  
 uniqueness of each person which it is  
 the special glory of autobiography to  
 show. Every major literary form does  
 something better than any other form  
 can do it; this is what autobiography  
 does.

Fleishman's method works (and very  
 well) when the author he is considering  
 was himself something of a fantasist.  
 Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* is a perfect  
 case for his treatment. The *Everlasting  
 No* is a tissue of literary references  
 which Fleishman can disentangle for  
 us. Ruskin is an intermediate case,  
 since his admitted determination to  
 dwell on happy things is halfway  
 towards shaping reality according to  
 the heart's desire. But the method  
 works ill with obstinate truth-tellers,  
 steeped in facts and documents, like  
 Newman and Mill. One can sym-  
 pathize with Fleishman's dilemma.  
 Should he omit the greatest and finest  
 examples of the genre? Or should he  
 apply to them a method at odds with  
 the drift and purpose of his own book?  
 Or should he try to make them fit the  
 pattern? He chose the third  
 alternative, which was bound to be  
 unsuccessful. It need not, however,  
 have been as unsuccessful as it actually  
 is, if only Fleishman knew more  
 history. It is perilous to write about  
 Newman's *Apologia* without first being  
 steeped in the history of the events and  
 the ideas about which Newman was  
 writing.

He begins by mistaking Newman's  
 metaphysical sense of the self as  
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